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**Heaven
opened; or,
Our home in
heaven, and
the way thither**



HEAVEN OPENED:
A
Manual of Guidance for Debut Souls.

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P A X .

HEAVEN OPENED;

OR,

OUR HOME IN HEAVEN,

AND THE

WAY THITHER.

A

Manual of Guidance for Doubtful Souls.

BY

REV. FATHER COLLINS.

"A door was opened in heaven, and the first voice
which I heard said, 'Come up hither.'"



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AND DERBY.
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CORRIGENDUM.

Page 346, line 12. The sentence ought to run thus:—S. Augustine and others maintain that Being, even in pain, is preferable to non-being. (De lib. Arbitr. iii. 6, 7, 8.) S. Augustine uses these words:—"Considera quantum bonum est esse, quod et beati et miseri volunt: majus enim est esse, et esse miserum, quam omnino non esse."

On the relief of the pains of the lost, S. Thomas has the following: "Hoc intelligitur de misericordia, aliquid relaxante, non de misericordia totaliter liberante, si extendatur etiam ad damnatos. Unde non dicit, 'Continebit *ab ira* misericordias suas, sed *in ira*: quia non totaliter pœna tolletur, sed et ipsa pœna durante, misericordia operabitur, eam diminuendo.'" Sum. III., Q. xcix. 3.

Preface.

THE principal aim of this Book is to provide, in modern turn of thought, a help towards a good life, in accordance with the principles of the Benedictine School of spiritual writers. Their system is more elastic than that of others. The soul is equally pressed on to the heights of holiness, but she is left more free from any binding method. Her individual character is consulted, and allowances are made to it in minor points, that the main end may be the better secured.

The second end has been to put more prominently forward than is usually done the various rewards of the happiness of Heaven, as things to be kept in view during our pilgrimage thither.

The Book does not profess to be a complete digested Treatise on all the means of securing a happy eternity. It is content to touch on some few chief points, leaving the rest to be elsewhere supplied.

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BOOK I.

THE FOREGROUND.

"Come into the land which I shall show thee."

GEN. XII, 1.

HEAVEN OPENED.

Book the First.

THE FOREGROUND.

CHAPTER I.

Man created for Heaven.



WHEN God created man, says S. Austin, He created him for happiness. He placed him, at his creation, in a garden of pleasure, a garden planted by His own hand, full of delights. Oh, how bright was man's first experience of life in that paradise of bliss. Adam had not many co-partners of his paradise. Man does not require many companions for his happiness. The society of but one to whom he can pour out his whole soul is enough for him. To Adam this one was Eve, a helper like himself: like him, yet not like him; like him in nature, in beauty, and sentiments; but still a fairer, softer reflection of himself: alike, but with just the difference that

made their society so delectable to each other. Adam's happiness was not a mere earthly happiness, though of that he had more than we can conceive; with no cares, or sorrows, or trials, nothing but pure bliss. But his greatest joy was his communion with God. Everything led him up to God. In everything he saw God, the print of God's finger, His power, His wisdom, and His love. He rested not in the creature, but went beyond, contemplating in all things the Creator. He loved God, and felt also that God loved him. It was no doubtful feeling, but a sure unhesitating certainty. Sin had not then formed that cloud which now obscures God from the soul.

Yet Adam was not quite content, though so much, so very much, had been made over to him. He had not the full command over creation. One fruit was withheld from him. It was but one tree, yet the restriction limited him. His knowledge was immense, so that he knew the virtues and qualities of each created thing, and gave to each its fitting name. Still his knowledge had a bound. He was not like God, knowing good and evil. And his communion with God, though filling him every moment with extatic delight, yet had not the fulness of joy of clear open vision. In no way was Adam's happiness complete, great though it was. It was but the earthly paradise: it was not heaven. God created man for heaven,

and nothing short of heaven will fully satisfy him. Heaven is an unmeasured, unlimited happiness. It is the full possession of all that is desirable, the possession of the Infinite.

2. God has created us for heaven. Some are born in this world to a splendid destiny. But there is no destiny so grand as the being born for heaven. Of all the grand positions on earth, none is comparable with the being a Saint of God, and equal to the Angels. For there none are little: all the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Each one there may sing with David: "The lines are fallen to me in goodly places; for my inheritance is excellent to me." On earth the prizes are few and the blanks are many; but heaven is a city of princes, where all are noble and of high rank. To all is given royal apparel and a beautiful crown.

It is observable of Abraham, that to the children of his concubines he gave certain gifts, and so sent them away; but to Isaac he reserved the inheritance; so does God give even to reprobate persons the grandeurs of this world, but He reserves the inheritance of heaven for His favourite and elect children. The grandeurs of this world do not necessarily confer happiness. A golden crown will not cure a aching heart. King Antigonus one day, turning his diadem in his fingers, said if people knew how much care was under it, they would

not be so eager to put it on. And Henry VII., in all his halls and public buildings set up in the windows the device of a crown upon thorns. The grandeurs of heaven alone confer happiness without mixture of pain, and the very least of its joys is above our comprehension. The eye may pierce afar off and reach even to the stars of heaven, but eye hath not seen those joys. The ear may gather in the description of the grandest and most glorious things; yet our ears have never heard anything like those joys. The understanding of man can unravel the most subtle problems, but it cannot reach so high, so deep, as to comprehend those joys, for they are greater than the heart of man can conceive.

Saint Augustine used to say that he had three wishes: first, that he might have seen Christ in the flesh; secondly, to have heard S. Paul preach; and thirdly, to have seen Rome in the days of its glory. But after all, these are small matters to those which the Saints in glory now behold. They see Christ, not now in the form of a servant, but Christ as a King in majesty and splendour; not Paul preaching in weakness and contempt, but Paul rejoicing and triumphant; not the perishing beauty of pagan Rome, but the glorious beauty of the New Jerusalem, that city whose maker and builder is God.

3. It is on this account that the Apocalypse

of Saint John is so valuable, so precious a book to us, because it reveals heaven to us. Of all the books of the New Testament the loss of this one would be, on some accounts, the most irreparable. It is the only book of its kind, and its loss could not be supplied. If one of the Gospels had been lost the other three would, in great measure, make up the deficiency. If an Apostolic Epistle had been lost the rest might have sufficed. But the loss of the Apocalypse would have left a blank nothing could fill, because no other book of Scripture has the like contents. This book is like a new revelation to us. It ushers us into a new land, a new world. It opens heaven to us. In other books we are told of heaven, we are instructed how to gain heaven; but here heaven is shown to us. We enter on its scenes. It is not the Saints in conflict any more, but the Saints in triumph, in possession of their crowns, victorious, reigning with Christ.

The Gospels, although they promise heaven, only portray the state of suffering. They speak of taking up the cross, of being hated of all men, of being persecuted from city to city. The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles continue the picture, with vivid details of sufferings actually undergone by the followers of the Crucified. But in the Apocalypse all is changed from tribulation into happiness. Already they taste of the divine banquet. Already

they are seated on their thrones. Already they chant the hymn of the victory of the Lamb slain, and behold the judgments of God poured forth upon their enemies. The whole book of the Apocalypse is a series of victories and jubilations, a diorama unfolded of splendid scenes of triumph.

In the records of the ancient dispensation, in the books of Isaias and Ezekiel, we have certain descriptions of heaven, but man forms no feature in them. In the visions, however, of the Apocalypse, it is quite otherwise. In them we behold a new element. A new race is seen; strangers coming from another country to their new home. The Angels around the throne fall back, that the new comers may take their places nearest to God's seat. Mankind are now in the first rank. The four living creatures before the throne no longer now symbolize the cherubim, but are symbols, as we learn from their Canticle, of those "redeemed out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." It is they now, and not the seraphs, who sing the "Holy, Holy, Holy," before the throne of God. The graces of the Gospel are the extension and individual application of the divine Incarnation to each of the faithful. For this reason many of the holy Fathers (see S. John Damascene *De Imaginibus*) think that man is thereby exalted above the very highest of the heavenly hierarchies, not above the Angels only,

but above the Cherubim and Seraphim. So our Lord revealed to S. Gertrude that He had exalted man above the Angels. (B. iii., ch. 8.)

No doubt one great object of this revelation was to put heaven so palpably before the eyes of the persecuted Christians of the first ages, as to strip death of its terrors, and make martyrdom desirable. What happened to Saint Stephen individually, when he looked up and saw heaven opened, was thus, in a symbolical manner, made over to the whole Church. But it was not for them only. To the end of time these scenes have the same ever living effect, stamping on the Christian mind the reality of the unseen world. The promises of the book are as fresh now as when first uttered. "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. In these the second death hath no power. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.*" After all, what is there worth striving for but heaven? To walk with Christ in white, to sit on His throne, as He is set down on His Father's throne! All the rest will break up like a bubble; all the rest is spending our strength for that which is not bread, a wasted life, a missed vocation. This, then, shall be my task till death. For nothing, O my God, can content me but the pleasures of Thy house! Then only shall I be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.

CHAPTER II.

Heaven our Home.

IT is probable that even in paradise before the fall the promise of heaven was made to Adam as his last end, the reward of fidelity. The abrupt way, also, in which the Woman and her Seed are spoken of, would lead us to conclude that Adam had heard of them before, and was aware of the plan of the Incarnation, the tidings new to him being that they should crush the serpent's head. The tradition about heaven passed on to the Patriarchs and to the Jewish people, for S. Paul assures us that they styled themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, as testifying that they sought a better heavenly country. But outside God's chosen people they lived without hope of heaven, for the Elysian fields of paganism were a sorry substitute for the joys of earth. The shade of Achilles, in Homer, prefers the life of the meanest drudge on the earth to the place of king over all the dead in the Elysian fields. The lowest place in this life was thought by them better than the highest happiness of the dead.

How the gates of heaven should be opened

was not revealed by God, even to His chosen people. This was God's secret, not to be known till the fulness of time should come. The veil that hid God's plan of redemption was only lifted a little, and just a few streaks of light shone through the cloud that concealed it from their eyes.

In the prophecy of Isaias concerning the "Child" to be born, the six names given Him in the Hebrew are by the Septuagint comprised in one, and it is said: "His Name shall be called the Angel of the Great Counsel." Such a Name for our Lord seems a strange mystery. For as God He is infinitely above the very highest Angels. S. Paul bears witness to this, when he says of the Eternal Father: "To which of the Angels hath He said at any time: Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee?" Indeed, when God brought His Only Begotten into the world He said: "Let all the Angels of God adore Him. For He is so much better than the Angels as He has obtained a more excellent Name than they;" that is, the Name of God. For to Him it is said: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." But if the name of "Angel" does not befit our Lord as God no more does it as man. For as man He is said to be "made a little lower than the Angels." And S. Paul expressly affirms that He took not on Him the nature of Angels, but the seed of Abraham.

To all these seeming difficulties, however, it is to be answered that the term *Angel* sometimes denotes one who bears the Angelic nature, and sometimes one who fulfils the Angelic office, the office of intercommunication between God and men. In this latter sense the Prophet Malachias says of the priest that he is the Angel of the Lord of Hosts. In the same prophet S. John Baptist is called by God "My Angel;" and our Lord is called the "Angel of the Testament." Our Lord did not take upon Him the Angelic nature, but only the Angelic office.

The ordinary communications between God and men are made through the lowest of the Angelic choirs. It is these Angels that, according to the expression of the Psalmist, camp round about them that fear God. But they are not the only ones of the Angelic hosts that minister between God and man. It was a Seraph that pierced the heart of Saint Teresa with a flaming dart. It was a Seraph that appeared to S. Francis with a crucifix, inflicting on him, by five streams of light, the marks of the Five Wounds. Gabriel is also, according to S. Denys, one of the highest of the Seraphim, nearest the throne of God, and not merely one of the choir of Archangels. For in the revelation of some high mystery, or in the carrying out of a great design, God makes choice of such messengers as shall, by their dignity, and the rich abundance of their

gifts, be perfectly capable of fitly executing His purposes.

But there was one mystery hidden in God from all eternity, for the revelation of which to mankind God could find no fitting messenger amongst all His creatures. Of His Angels thousands of thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before Him. But of all this multitudinous company He could find no one that was worthy. For this mystery transcended the understanding of the highest Angelic intelligence. No one was able to reach it—none could compass it. Its hidden wisdom, so wonderful, so secret, baffled the straining glance of their scrutinizing gaze. They desired to look into it but were unable, beaten back by the incomprehensible glory of that light.

Of this mystery the prophets had indeed spoken in broken speech, but their utterances were utterances beyond the limited reach of their own ken ; and they searched and inquired into the things of which they prophesied, which were partly revealed to them, and partly hidden. The whole creation was groaning and in labour, waiting for One who should be able to open the Book of God's secret counsel, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And no one was able, neither in heaven nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the Book. But God had respect to the weeping of His creatures, and as

none was found worthy He sent His own Son, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom, of knowledge, to open the Book and to loose the seven seals thereof.

And the first seal was loosed when the Angel Gabriel came to announce to Mary the message from heaven, and the Incarnation of God took place in her womb. And the second seal was loosed when our Lord was born of Mary in a stable. And the third seal was loosed when our Lord worked His first miracle at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him. And the fourth seal was loosed when He died on the cross, and opened Paradise to the good thief. And the fifth seal was loosed when He broke the prison gates of hell, and rose glorious from the sepulchre. And the sixth seal was loosed when He ascended up into heaven, going to prepare a place for us. And the seventh seal was loosed when He sent down the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, to lead His disciples into all truth, and to make known all things to them.

God's secret had now come out. It was no longer His own. The Book containing it had been thrown open by the Angel of the Great Counsel. This hidden counsel of God was how He should blot out the sin of mankind, and open again to them the gates of heaven. Who would have expected that this was to be

effected by the shedding of the Blood of God's own Incarnate Son? Although the prophets had foretold His sufferings together with His glory, yet the eye naturally turned away. Such utter humiliation seemed to nature, in One so glorious, wholly out of place. The picture could only be seen in its truthful beauty when placed in its own proper light. That light was a new revelation from God, an opening of the eyes, a strengthened vision.

After our Lord's resurrection He opened the understanding of His disciples, to understand the Scriptures. But much more did He do so by the Gift of Pentecost. The full understanding of God's plan has, however, been a thing of continual growth in His Church. New lights, new depths, are ever appearing: new disclosures of God's marvellous wisdom and love, which thrill our hearts with delighted wonder. This fund of joy will last unexhausted through all eternity.

O my God, do Thou be pleased to open my eyes that I may see the wonderful things of Thy law; that I may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of Thy wisdom and charity in Christ, which passeth knowledge, and may be filled by Thy Spirit with all the fulness of Thy graces.

CHAPTER III.

Jesus the Way to Heaven.

OUR Lord has pointed out the road to heaven. It is by Himself. "I am the Way." He is the Gate. No one comes to the Father but by Him. If we would be received by God, we must be found in Him.

When the disciples looked up after the Transfiguration, they saw "Jesus only." All else was gone. He alone remained. It was enough. "Jesus only" was the eternal thought of God, the image of Himself, upon which He looked with love: all His perfections pictured out to the very life; His very counterpart; the Figure of His Substance in the Godhead; the spotless mirror of Uncreated Light in the Manhood; the full Reservoir of His treasures, whether made or unmade; the Godhead and creation gathered together and summed up in one point.

"Jesus only!" All things were made by Him: all things were made for Him. He was the Alpha and Omega of all; the beginning and ending; the first-born of every creature. In Him only things had a meaning. Separate from Him, all was aimless and unsatisfactory. He was the climax, to which the efforts of

created things pointed as to their full expression. All flowed from Him as the rays of light from the sun. Cut off from Him they would sink back again into that nothing from which, for His sake only, they were drawn.

2. Till our Lord's advent into this world all that had gone before was a vast preparation, on the part of God, for His coming. Those cycles of ages that geology tells of; the successive creations and re-absorbing of the various species with which, at one or other time, this globe has been peopled; the alterations of its climate, its fauna and flora: all told of Him, all in one way or other presignified Him, all were a prelude of Him who was to gather up all their perfections in Himself, who was to be the knot indissoluble through which all created things should be bound fast to God. In all the things, then, that thus went before Him, God saw Jesus only. In one or other beauty they were faint foreshadowings of Him. They led the way up to Him: some nearer, some further off. Their value was in proportion as His lineaments were traceable in them, or in proportion as they gave glory to Him. And "Jesus only" was the grand idea, out of which all the rest came—Jesus God and Man.

3. All was summed up in "Jesus only;" all symbolized in Him; all contained in Him. Whether it was the clay of the ground, or the loftiest hierarchies of heaven, He was the

Spring of all: all were abridged in Him. Those Angelic worlds which God formed at the same time as He brought into being the worlds of matter; those splendid intelligences which, in the freedom of their spiritual substance, drink in the light of God, these own Jesus only for their Head. It was for Him that they were created. They knew their place at His Incarnation. It was to do honour to Him that they had received their being, and they worshipped Him with loving adoration and reverent dread.

The patriarchs also, and kings, and prophets, and priests, and righteous men, by their offices and their histories typified "Jesus only!" All that was good in them, all that was worth preserving, had the flavour of Him. He was seen in them. He was the key to the true import of their lives; the secret clue to guide us through the labyrinth. Even sinners sometimes, strangest of all, in one incident or other, are the prefigurements of Him; we see the features of the Sinless One underlying or intermingled with those of wicked men; His noble countenance shining forth like a gleam of sunlight in the midst of a storm. Lose sight of Jesus, and the true meaning of the ancient Scriptures is hopelessly gone. They are ciphers without signification, a sealed book. To read them aright we must see in them "Jesus only."

4. What has been said of the Old Dispensation applies with yet more force to the New, under which we live. The eye of faith sees everywhere "Jesus only." The Sacraments do not obscure Christ, as unfaithful men have vainly thought. To look upon them as a sort a misty cloud between the soul and her Saviour, a cloud which intercepts, at least more or less, her view of Him, contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel, is a gross delusion. Imaginings of this sort are wholly groundless; for in these things the faithful soul sees "Jesus only."

If the priest absolves it is not as having any power in himself, but it is the Hand of Jesus Christ, stretched out from the highest heavens, that signs pardon to the penitent, and pronounces the sweet absolving words. In the baptism of a child it is not the few drops of water that wash away the sin of the soul, but it is the precious Blood of Christ joined inwardly with this outward and visible sign. So in the Holy Eucharist it is not the visible accidents of bread and wine which the faithful adore, nor the substance of bread—which, indeed is not there,—but it is the Body and Blood of Christ which they worship with lowly veneration, really though invisibly present, under the veils of the consecrated species. The reverence paid to the person and words of the priest, the honour given to those who have embraced the Religious State, and countless

other matters, are to be explained and unlocked by this key. It is Jesus who thus has homage paid to Him. In all these things the faithful have respect to and see "Jesus only."

5. The veneration again of the Saints, whether they be reigning with Christ in heaven, or showing forth miracles on the earth, is all of it an indirect worship of Jesus. The eye of the understanding is opened to see in them "Jesus only." If in the Old Testament Saints, such as Abel and Melchisedech, we see Jesus, how much more in the Saints of the New Law? They are a sort of extension of the Incarnation, and of His own life on the earth. It is not they who live, but Christ who lives in them. The wonderful things and graces in them, which call forth our veneration, are not so much theirs as His. He is the source of all their power, and all their merits. They can obtain nothing but through His Blood, so that in honouring them we do but honour Him.

6. "Jesus only!" was the reason of all creation. He did not come first in time, but He came first in idea. When a great master-builder would construct a palace, he designs in his mind first the whole plan of the building. He then begins to build. So is it with God. Our minds are reflex images of His eternal mind. First in order of ideas God sees the end; afterwards the means that lead to that end. The end of the Incarnation was that Jesus, God-Man,

should be enthroned in the glory of heaven, above Angels and Archangels, Principalities and Powers, and every name that is named, whether in heaven or in earth, or under the earth, and that He should be thus the link uniting all creation to the Most High God. The end of creation is achieved by this union. As the Word He had drawn it out of nothing; as the Word made Flesh He unites it to God.

The temple in which Samson played for the Philistines was all supported on two pillars; so all creation leans for its support on the pillars of the Godhead and the Manhood of Jesus Christ. The beauty and glory of creatures are little sparkles from the effulgence of His splendour. Even in heaven, when the Saints shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, yet their brightness will in no way interfere with the unique glory of Jesus Christ. He alone will, after all, be the Lamp of the Heavenly Jerusalem. As the clouds shine with the light of the sun, so the Saints shall shine filled with His light. Their splendour is a participation of His. Their streams of brilliance are the overflowings of His fulness. This we shall clearly recognize, so that when lost in wonder at their glory, we shall still see "Jesus only."

Open now, O Lord, my eyes, to behold Thee whilst on earth, that when Thy glory shall appear I may be satisfied with it.

CHAPTER IV.

Christ our King.

AS our Lord is the Way to heaven, so is He also the King under whose banner we must fight our road to this promised land. Our Lord's claims to allegiance are put forth in many of His parables; but it was when brought before Pilate that He distinctly recognized as His due the title of King. He stands before Pilate as a prisoner. His hands are bound; they hold no sceptre; He wears no golden crown. A forlorn and deserted man, He has none to do Him homage; yet when questioned if He is a king, He answers: "Thou sayest it. I am a King." Pilate, on the contrary, was to be seen in his splendid robes of state, with his band of soldiers, having power to release or crucify. He is there as the representative of the Roman Cæsar; he wields in his hand the power and majesty of the empire: and it ends in our Lord being condemned to the death of the cross.

Pilate was sorry to have to put our Lord to death, for he was persuaded that His kingdom of truth, a kingdom not of this world, was a harmless dream, a mere idea. But had he

lived a few centuries later on in the world's history he would have then found our Lord, not a mere nominal king, not a king of a bare and empty idea, but a King whose precepts had more urgent force than the most stringent laws of the empire; a King whose commands, when they clashed with those of Cæsar, were held to have the precedence, to be obeyed at every hazard, though loss of wealth, loss of honour, or even loss of life were the consequence of such obedience.

Pilate was mistaken. Our Lord's kingdom, though not a worldly kingdom, was still a real kingdom, *in* this world, and *over* this world. Our Lord, in establishing it, sought for a dominion over all persons and all affairs in this world. He excepts no one and no thing. He is to be King of kings, and Lord of lords; and is to draw all things to Himself. Wherever our Lord's kingdom of truth has appeared it has subjugated men and things. It did so from the very outset. It so mixed itself with the thoughts, the feelings, the daily life of society under the empire of pagan Rome, that that empire, inextricably founded on paganism, could not stand erect under its moral tone and influence, but crumbled all the more quickly to its ruin.

The kingdom of Christ, when it entered into society, did not revolutionize it. Society was left as before, with its distinction of ranks, but

toned with a new spirit. The tyrant was turned into a king; the nobles into guardians of the people. The rich became providers for the poor. Woman was lifted up to be a real help-mate for the man, the sharer of his life; and the slave became a brother.

The spirit of Christ's kingdom entered the state, and caused new laws to be made; laws against injustice, rapine, and wrong. It gave a new turn to politics, and the relation of one nation to another. It taught new principles in the science of government. Literature and language felt its influence; and by it art was transformed and elevated. Nothing escaped from its sway, whether in the private home or public duties. It penetrated and filled everything with its subtle life. The monarch on his throne, and the peasant in his cabin, both equally acknowledged its subduing power. It claimed everything as its own, in one way or other permeating and consecrating all. In every field of activity, every interest, every joy, and every hope, it must be the enlivening quickening principle, purging the natural and exalting it to the supernatural. Law acquired new force by its sanction; marriage new sacredness; parental responsibility new vigour; filial duty additional obligation.

But this success was not gained without immense conflicts. The history of Christ's kingdom is a history of struggles; one long battle,

which is not yet over. Men see and hate the sway of Christianity. It curbs the despotism of tyrants in power. It asserts that there is a Lord above them, and they cannot endure to be in the second place. This is why the state has thrown off the yoke of religion. This is why it is sought to banish religion from the education of the young. It is a hatred of the domination of Christ; a dislike of His influence; an unwillingness to consult Him, to have to submit to Him. The kingdom of Christ is a continual barrier against false freedom and licence of action. His laws are deemed overstrained, unnatural, admirable perhaps, but impracticable, especially in these times.

Outside of His Church our Lord naturally expects this opposition to His kingdom. What grieves Him most is that even within He finds so few souls thoroughly loyal. The devout often think to purchase His favour at a very small expense, at a cheap rate. Some soar with Father Baker to the highest contemplation, or rest sweetly with S. Teresa in the delicious prayer of quiet. And yet this high elevation does not prevent their seeming to be quite in their element at the opera or at a ball. It is not that they are really in their element at these worldly diversions. Balls are a terrible penance to them, but through a spirit of humility they take care not to show their dislike, and they manage so admirably that no one would

suspect the pain of their hearts. Now it is true that saintly persons may sometimes be required by their position in society to take part in worldly gaieties; but few are such clever dissemblers as to appear so completely at their ease amidst what is very distasteful to them.

Others join some Third Order of Penance. They show a great zeal for the Order. But for the penance they are like the pilgrim of old, who, having to perform a pilgrimage with peas in his shoes, took the liberty first to boil his peas, and so walked gaily on. These holy Tertiaries are dispensed from all obligations, and like Dives in the Gospel, they dress in the height of the fashion, and feast sumptuously every day. Others again become Saints cheap by the frequency of their Communions. They go to Communion four or five times in a week, perhaps every day; but as for preparation or thanksgiving, this they consider quite unnecessary. Besides they have not the health for it, nor the time. They have time in plenty for trifling gossip; but none for this. Père Eymard, founder of the Congregation of Priests of the Most Holy Sacrament, in his "Conference on a good Thanksgiving," (*La Divine Eucharistie*,) laments how many are admitted to frequent Communion who by their carelessness show themselves utterly unfitted for it; who seem

"scarce able to distinguish things sacred from things profane."

It is quite possible to have a taste for piety and to be wicked. Henry III. of France delighted in processions, practised various devotional exercises and penances, and at the same time lived a debauched life, and his hands were stained with blood. Our modern fashionables have sometimes a Father Director, who is to arrange about their meditations, certain little penances, and their days of Communion. Their daily practical life is not his matter at all. He must not interfere there. His sphere is to be in things *purely spiritual*; as if Jesus Christ cared a great deal about the tithe of mint and cummin, but had no concern for the enlightening of the conscience, and for fidelity in the various duties of ordinary life.

My Jesus! what I dispraise, what I disesteem in others, let me never be guilty of myself. When Thou didst proclaim Thyself my King, Thou didst straightway ascend on the throne of Thy Cross. If I would be Thy true courtier, I too must be crucified to the flesh and to the world. The Cross must be marked everywhere on me, on my dress, on my forehead, and on my hand, but above all on my heart; that by the cross I may be close knit to Thee, who didst die to redeem me on the Cross.

CHAPTER V.

Symbols of our Lord's Royalty.

“THEY put a scarlet cloak about Him, and plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it on His Head, and a reed in His right Hand.”

When the Roman soldiers, previous to the crucifixion, wished to treat our Lord as a mock king, they gave to Him these emblems of His mock royalty, the purple or scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed for a sceptre.

Purple was the emblem of *wealth*. Purple garments were exceedingly costly, partly because of the preciousness of the dye, and partly because the art of dyeing was known to so few. On this account to wear purple was a mark of extreme opulence, for which reason it is noted of Dives, not only that he feasted sumptuously every day, but also that he was clad in *purple* and fine linen. For the same cause it is mentioned of the harlot in the Apocalypse that she was “clothed in purple and scarlet.”

In many ancient states it was forbidden for any but princes, or persons of the blood royal, to be clad in purple or scarlet. Purple was the colour set apart for royalty. Early in the history of the world we find this. In the Book

of Judges, amongst the spoils of Madian, mention is made of the purple raiment which the Kings of Madian were wont to use. In the Book of Esther, when Mardochai, the Jew, was raised to be the first prince in the kingdom, it is said that, going forth from the palace, he shone in royal apparel, to wit, of violet and sky colour, wearing a golden crown on his head, and clothed with a cloak of silk and purple. So also when King Alexander willed to recognize Jonathan Machabeus as prince of the people of the Jews, he made known this wish by sending to him "a purple robe and a crown of gold."

When the Roman soldiers treated our Lord as a mock-king they arrayed Him in a purple robe. But as purple represented the riches of kings, and they were making a scorn of His poverty, this robe was doubtless some tattered, cast-off garment, such as none but a beggar would wear. Kings must have riches in order to reward those who are faithful to them, and in order to purchase by benefactions the services of those who otherwise would not cleave to them. And this King of the Jews, as He called Himself, where were His riches? What had He to offer by which to attract powerful men to His cause? Absolutely nothing. This tattered purple was then in good keeping with His poverty-stricken royalty.

So thought the soldiers, and they thought

rightly. The kingdom of our Lord was truly a kingdom of poverty. He had no riches to offer to His followers. He utterly disclaimed being able to do so. To become great in His kingdom, men who were rich must become poor, selling all they had. Rich people shall hardly be able to get a low place in His kingdom, or even to enter into it at all. His primary doctrine is "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven." That kingdom, which no one else would take, our Lord took. It was like the cast-off purple garment which no one else would wear. When the Jews once would have taken our Lord by force to make Him a King, He fled away from them, for He wished not to have such a worldly kingdom as they would have thrust on Him, with wealth and honours. But now that the soldiers made Him a King of poverty, even in scorn, He accepts the badge and makes no resistance.

The soldiers thought that a King of poverty would soon be abandoned and friendless. They were mistaken. Our Lord, with His cloak of ragged purple, has had more faithful friends and closer adherents than the richest of earthly kings. His poverty, far from repelling, has been the great magnet of attraction.

2. The second emblem of His royalty, given to our Lord by the soldiers, was the crown: not a crown of gold indeed, but a crown of thorns. Crowns were used of ancient times to adorn the

heads of kings. Saul, the first king of Israel, wore a crown. By the crown is signified *dignity* and *joy*; but by the crown of thorns disgrace and pain. Crowns were worn, not by kings only; bridegrooms wore a crown, priests wore a crown often, victors in the athletic Greek games wore a crown. There were crowns of various sorts: crowns of gold, of bay leaves, of ivy; crowns of myrtle, and of roses, or other flowers. But when was a crown of thorns ever heard of? These thorns were sown by the sin of the first Adam. The second Adam reaps what the first Adam sowed. The crown of thorns, tradition tells us, was made of the common Syrian acanthus. Its spikes are two inches long, stout and stiff; the points are hard and sharp as a needle. Indeed this was, according to the words of Isaias, "a crown of tribulation."

But the soldiers were right in making this the emblem of our Lord's royal state. For He does not promise joys to His followers, but tears. Instead of honours, He tells them, they shall have disgrace. They shall be hated of all men for His Name's sake. Our Lord's blessings are: "Blessed are they that mourn and weep. Blessed are they that suffer persecution. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and shall speak all manner of evil against you." These are the thorns with which He would adorn His courtiers and His favourites. They

are thorns from His own crown. He has taken them like precious gems to give them to His dearest friends. But by wearing these thorns first Himself He has blunted the points. They were once sharp, but now they are sweet. He has broken the hard points off, and instead of thorns they have become blossoms of roses, but not worldly roses. His crown of thorns He has made to be preferable to the best roses of this world.

Our Lord appeared once to S. Catherine of Siena, and gave her choice of two crowns, one of thorns the other of roses. She chose the thorns. In some Benedictine convents the postulant is presented in gay worldly apparel, with a crown of flowers on her head. But when she changes her habit for that of the brides of Christ, she re-enters, and instead of a crown of flowers she wears a crown of thorns. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, going into church one day with a crown of gold on her head, and seeing our Lord on the rood with a crown of thorns, took her crown off and put it at her feet. The crown of gold became hateful to her when she saw our Lord with His crown of thorns. King Henry IV. of England, falling asleep one day, his crown fell off from his head. His boy Henry, coming in, took it, and put it on his own head. The King, awaking, saw this, and said to him: "Ah, my son! you will find that crown quite heavy enough to wear

when the proper time arrives for you to put it on." Worldly dignities are burdensome, but the thorns of our Saviour become a sweet and lightsome crown.

3. The third emblem of our Lord's royalty was the reed in His right hand for a sceptre. The sceptre was the symbol of *power*; the rod with which to enforce obedience, and strike down oppressors. "Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The sceptre, as *type* of kingly rule, is spoken of by Jacob, when he says: "The sceptre shall not depart from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till Shiloh come." A reed is the symbol, not of power, but of feebleness. It is weak, and hollow, and barren. The soldiers gave our Lord the reed as emblem of His inability to enforce His commands. They would insinuate that, having no strength to enforce justice and right, His weak rule could be productive of no benefit to His subjects, but would be barren as the reed.

Saint John Baptist was said to be not like a reed, because he stood firmly to what he put forth. Egypt's weakness is symbolised in Isaias by the broken staff of a reed, unable to support him who leans on it.

It is true that our Lord's rule is seemingly weak. He will not contend nor cry out. He will not break the bruised reed. He is the mild and meek, that yields Himself to him that judges Him

unjustly. How then will He be able to subdue to Himself the unruly wills of men? And yet He has managed to do so in every age, in every clime. Thousands and millions have rendered to Him an uncompelled allegiance. Brute force is powerless before Him,—the knife, the rack, the fire;—for His subjects love Him so much that they [will part with all they count most dear, rather than dishonour Him. The world is amazed. It cannot understand the folly of this blind subjection. The world is annoyed and angry. That devotion to their cause, which other kings have in vain sought to conciliate, He has had thrust upon Him. With no material weapons to enforce His law, He has but to whisper, and He is obeyed. He has but a reed in His right hand.

Our Lord has but a reed in His right Hand; a robe of poverty; a crown of thorns. We mind it not. This voluntary abasement is His Will, and we love Him for it all the more. The weaker He seems, the more loyal shall our subjection be. The poorer, and more full of troubles, the closer will we come. We will bend the knee, not in mockery, but in lowliest reverential worship, claiming Him as our King. No one shall command us but He. If we obey other lords, it shall be only for His sake.

CHAPTER VI.

The Three Maries.

WHEN our Lord was crucified there stood three Maries by His cross. There was Mary the Mother of God, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Mary, God's Mother, was all holy and all pure; Mary of Cleophas was an ordinary virtuous woman; and Mary Magdalene had been very sinful. These three Maries, so strangely differing from each other, nevertheless under the cross had but one heart. There was a bond that united all three, and merged them as if into one, and that bond was love of the Crucified. There they stood, their eyes turned up with adoring love to that mangled form, and their hearts so knit by sympathy with His, that it seemed strange theirs should still live on when His was dead. In the scene before their eyes there were three distinct lessons being taught, one for each of the Maries, but Mary the Mother of God was the only one that then comprehended them in full. To the other Maries these lessons were as in a book whose seals had not been loosed, whose mysterious characters they were unable to decipher. Only in after

days the full clear meaning spread itself out before the wondering gaze of their adoring eyes. But these lessons were not for them only: they were for all those who, with hearts like to theirs, should to the end of time stand beneath the cross, from the same scene taught the same lessons.

1. The first revelation of the mystery of Christ's cross is that unveiled to the sinful penitent. It is a mixed mystery: in part exposing the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and in part the freeness, fulness, and abundance of pardon. The guilt of sin is nowhere viewed aright but under the cross. It is there that its malignity shows out. It appears by a light shining forth from the suffering Form of the Crucified One, the Son of God. In the gaping wounds, those cheeks streaming with Blood, the clotted hair dabbled on the torn brow, the back gored deep with stripes, the failing eyes and drooping head: these it is that tell how enormous sin must be to require such a sacrifice. But it is, above all, the look of sweet patience with which all these sufferings are fully and freely accepted to atone for the sins of men; it is this that breaks the sinner's heart, and makes him hate himself, and makes him wish, if it were possible, to take the Innocent Victim's place: so grieved is he to behold the catastrophe brought on by his sins, to be the cause of such hapless woes.

But what aggravates yet more to him the sense of his guilt is the fulness and freeness of the pardon accorded. Never did his sins appear so black, so wholly unpardonable, as now that they are pardoned. The outstretched Arms of love spread forth to receive him; the opened Heart in which to find a home; the Blood shed to the last drop for him; all these renew the agony of his repentance, and stir him to the quick with unutterable emotion, making streams of tears to furrow deep the hard rock of his mind, and changing the once stony heart to a heart of flesh. The stupendous love of Christ, bestowed on one so unworthy, seems beyond belief and yet is true, is believed. Then many passages of holy Scripture that speak of Christ as a Saviour come home to the soul with a vivid force never before experienced: such as "him that cometh to Me I will not cast out;" "come to Me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or again: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and if they be as crimson, they shall be as wool." That Christ is the Good Shepherd, the Saviour of sinners, the Physician of the sick, are things which appear in a new and living light, as if never before believed or apprehended. All these things, and a thousand more, are seen under the cross by Mary Magdalene and the companions of her degree.

2. The next aspect of the cross is that which beholds in the Crucified Redeemer every virtue in its supremest perfection. *There* is to be seen a love that sacrifices all, that holds nothing back, but, cost what it may, spends itself in blessing. It is a love wholly unselfish, that has nothing to gain and all to lose; a love that, in its desire to benefit, perseveres through pain and shame and every difficulty; a love whose ardour nothing can check or slacken, which ingratitude may wound but cannot kill; a love worthy of God; the love of the Son of God to the children of men. There is to be seen a submission stretched to its utmost limits; a compliance without a murmur, without any resistance to all that our nature has most repugnance to: and this from Him who had power, with but one rough word, to bring to utter destruction His persecutors, and to free Himself.

In the cross is to be seen mercy forgiving the completed act of rebellion, and even making from the sin of the criminal an instrument to open to him the way of pardon. Patience is seen bearing meekly the most barbarous tortures of cruelty and malice. See the stretch to which obedience is there put. It is remarked with wonder how our Lord, when a Boy of twelve years old, put aside for a time the business for which He had come into this world, and, going down to Nazareth, was

subject to His parents. But now how much further is His subjection extended. He now subjects Himself to wicked men, and at the bidding of the executioners stretches out His Hands that they may be nailed to the tree. In His humility He receives the utmost scorn and contempt; they that go by wagging their heads, and telling Him to come down from the cross, if He can save Himself. And those helpless nails, it was not they that kept Him fastened there, but His humility and His love. He has consented to be esteemed a vile wretch, and less worthy of life than even Barabbas the robber and the murderer. His poverty leaves Him there destitute of all things, not able to get even a drop of water to quench His thirst, and beholden to another after death for His place of burial. His natural affections, too, He offers up by the surrender of His Mother, His last His dearest possession.

In all these things the virtuous behold in Him their pattern and their model. What formerly He taught by precept He now exhibits in action. It is the gospel teaching exemplified in its most perfect way. All the virtues and graces crowded together. Those things that might else have had a look of harshness lose this look in the light of the cross, mixed with the tenderness and ineffable grace of the Son of God. The virtuous therefore linger beneath the cross with Mary of Cleophas. Nowhere

else can they obtain such clear expositions of the doctrine of their Master, or drink such deep draughts of His spirit.

3. But there is still another stage, where Mary the Mother of God stands, and with her a small band. These are the chosen few, a little flock, the elect of the elect. Mary entered yet more deeply into the veil, and her soul was martyred with her Son. She became as it were part and parcel of the mystery of the cross, her sentiments being entirely conformed to those of her Son, and her heart pierced with His. She did not wish to save Him from His sufferings. She did not wish His sufferings to be one whit the less than they actually were; she only strove to share them. She entered into their efficacy for the redemption of mankind, and saw Him as a grain of wheat dying that He might produce much fruit. Her own sufferings Mary did not wish to diminish. They were to her a hidden manna, having a taste exceedingly delicious, but a taste wholly above all the things of nature and indescribable. By this suffering she more than ever passed out of herself into her Son, becoming as it were identified with Him; not indeed losing her own personality, yet possessed wholly by the same spirit as Himself, her life hidden in God with Christ.

Mary has had some co-partners with her of this grace. Such amongst the Saints were

those who said: "Either to suffer or to die;" or again, "Not to die but to suffer." Here the top of Mount Calvary is reached, and the station is made so close by the cross that it acts as a magnet, drawing the soul to union with itself, and impregnating it with its own secret virtue. Suffering then becomes a thing desirable; so that, if it were equally for the glory of God to suffer or not to suffer, suffering would have the preference of itself. For the soul is actuated by the same sentiments as Christ; the Bride has the same spirit as the Bridegroom; and as He left His glory to suffer, so she leaves her joy and chooses rather to suffer. Disgrace, contempt, and pain, and interior desolation, she not only bears with resignation for His sake, but she welcomes it as her best portion, her joy, and her delight. Surely *then* she may say: "I live no longer, but Christ liveth in me;" so transformed are all her own natural sentiments into His. Her own heart is gone and she has taken His instead.

The three Maries stood beneath the cross, distressed spectators of what they neither could nor dared attempt to alter. They gaze only in agony on the suffering form of Him who is to them their all in all. Their eyes feed on Him; they follow each slightest movement. Their ears drink in His every word. Their sympathetic presence, like a mournful strain of attendant music, seems to perform the part of chorus

in a Greek tragedy. That strain has never failed. Ever since that day, as the ages have rolled on, three watchers have still been ever seen under the cross, and by their adoring sympathy have continued unbroken the same ceaseless melody.

O my Lord, woe is me! woe is me! that I have hitherto held my peace. For I am {of unclean lips. But purge Thou my lips and my heart, I beseech Thee, with a coal of fire, from this altar of Thy love, that my iniquity may be taken away, and that my mouth may sing forth what Thou shalt teach me of the notes of Thy praise.

CHAPTER VII.

Mary's place.

IT was not when on Calvary that Mary first entered into the spirit of the Cross. The spirit of the Cross had been hers all her life. It is said she was praying for the Redeemer of Israel when the Angel Gabriel came to announce to her that she was to be His Mother. To her illuminated eyes this Redeemer was not a glorious earthly conqueror, but a Man of Sorrows, by whose stripes mankind should be healed; so that in consenting to be His Mother she chose to share in the bitterness of His chalice, and knew, at least in an obscure manner, the terrible price she would have to pay for her high place near Him.

At the birth of her Child Mary was ushered into a new world, or rather into two new worlds. The first world was her newly found Motherhood. By becoming a mother the whole fabric of her life was altered, not only that of her external duties, but much more that of her inner being. A pent up spring in her heart had been opened, which now had free play, a spring of new feelings and emotions proper to her new state, so that from it the waters welled

forth in such streams of plentifulness as quite to flood her whole soul. Of all womankind she is the only one that, together with the delight of being a virgin, has known also the pleasures of being a mother. The perfections both of a mother and a maid belong to her. She had the feelings and sentiments of both. After being barren and old to become a mother enhances the joy, as it did to Sara and Elizabeth, the pleasure is such a surprise ; but much more to be a maid and a mother too. In her amazed gladness Mary felt all the more that her Child was wholly the gift of God ; His conception miraculous ; His birth miraculous. That gift, which she had received so purely from God's bounty, what could she do but render it back gladly and freely to the Giver ? She was ready at once, and without a struggle, to part with her treasure the moment God should signify His will. As her eyes rested for the first time on the beautiful Face of her Child she offered Him up to God, her heart bounding with delight, and the streams of pleasure thrilling through her soul, to think that she could make an oblation to her God of so inestimable a gift.

The forty days between Christmas and the Purification were to our Lady days of unutterable joy, of unmixed gladness. We all have seasons when, in the midst of pain or sadness, pain and sadness are overmastered by fulness

of joy, so that for the time they become as if they had no existence. It was not that she was ignorant of coming woes, but the overflowing abundance of excessive joy so filled her to the full that pain and sorrow were for the time obliged to stand outside. She was too occupied. There was no room for their consideration. At the end of the forty days came the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, which is a sort of fitting climax for the mysteries of the Infancy, and completes them by a solemn closing scene.

The second world which Mary entered at the birth of her Son was a new supernatural world, a world of graces coming to her from the companionship of her Child. The sanctity of the Word made Flesh shone in His Face, and in all His little gestures, making them all like so many Sacraments to the soul of His Mother. She was ravished out of herself and above herself, dwelling in Him, and her soul, as it were, melted into His. When things are new to us, the impression they make on us is exceedingly vivid. This it was that caused these forty days to be days of such delicious repose. God was pleased thus to strengthen Mary's soul to receive the pang of Simeon's prophecy, just as by the vision of the Transfiguration our Lord prepared His disciples to bear the Crucifixion.

2. The Presentation of our Lord in the Temple was a rehearsal for Calvary. When Simeon

told Mary of the sword that should pierce her soul, then before her mental vision, clearer than before, arose the scene of the Crucifixion, her Son hanging on the Tree, His Hands and Feet pierced through, His Flesh all gashed and torn, and His sweet Face dabbled with Blood. At the Presentation Mary redeemed our Lord with the customary offering of a pair of turtle doves. But she knew that, later on, a second time God would require this same offering from her. Abraham, when he had offered Isaac, was allowed to substitute a ram in his stead, and the offering was never again required. But it was not to be so with our Blessed Lady. The throe of agony which pierced her soul, at the words of Simeon, was only the first instalment of those anguishing pains which were one day to break her heart, when her offering was completed under the shameful Tree.

From that day forward, with ever increasing clearness, the scene of the Crucifixion stood before her eyes; and partly she gained more knowledge from the Holy Scriptures, and partly she was taught by God Himself, and partly she learned about it from her Son. And all those thirty-three years Mary still continued her offering, making it, as time went on, with greater and greater perfection, drawn more and more into the spirit of Calvary, that she might stand beneath the rood as the pure offerer of a spotless Victim, making oblation of that Lamb

which alone could take away the sins of a guilty world.

It was the offering up of this Victim by Mary that drew down the Holy Ghost. Thus was opened to man the whole scheme of Christ's Redemption. But Mary's intercessory work still continued even after she had laid aside the burden of the flesh. For it pleased God that as the fall was brought about partly by means of the woman, so the restoration of the human race should be partly by means of the woman. In the Scripture the fall is attributed solely to Adam, and the Redemption to Christ; but in both these cases the woman in a lower order is tacitly included. As Eve's work was an item in the history of the Fall, so Mary fittingly assisted in the plan of Redemption. In heaven, after her Assumption, Mary carries on that fruitful offering which she began upon earth.

It is on this account that from the earliest ages the veneration of Mary has been blended with the adoration of our Lord. It might have been thought that the Nestorians, who denied to Mary the title of Mother of God, would also fall off from Christianity in the veneration of our Lord's Mother. But they seem to have been only the more careful to surround Mary with a lavish worshipful homage, as if to try to prove that the denial of this title was not meant in any way to lessen her honour. In all other respects they vie with the orthodox in extolling

the graces and privileges received by her from God. It is evident that at that early period of the Church's history the place of Mary, as given her now by Catholics, was already clearly stated, and heretics, such as the Nestorians, never thought to question it, though opposing that highest title of hers,—Mother of God.

The place of Mary is that of helper in the world's redemption. Through her pure hands our Lord has willed that the fruits of the Incarnation and His Passion should flow to men. According to the sentiment of Saint Bernard, God, who willed to give Jesus to the world by Mary, will also to give the graces of Jesus to sinful men by Mary's hands. "Ask, therefore, for gifts," he says, "and ask them by Mary." No surer way for salvation, no surer way for sanctity, than to put our all into the hands of Mary. That which of itself would not be acceptable, will find favour with God when offered by her holy hands. That which our own prayers are too feeble for, her powerful intercessions will obtain for us. On our road to heaven we must therefore never lose sight of Mary. We ought ever to feel that our hand is in hers, and she will guide us through the valley of the shadow of death to the holy mountains of the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sacrifice.

IN the Christian dispensation many words have obtained an enlarged and higher signification. For when the grand ideas of Christianity came before the world, it was necessary either that new words should be coined to express them, or else old words must be exalted to a new and loftier sense. Thus, in Christian language sacrifice is a something exceedingly noble ; but before Christianity the word sacrifice had no such signification. Its new meaning is the fruit of the moral grandeur of the sacrifice of Christ, and of those Christians who have been made after His example.

The principal end of sacrifice, according to the practice of the ancients, was to avert calamity from men by causing it to fall on the victim sacrificed. The victim became a substitute for the really guilty. It received and exhausted, by dying, the anger of God. The more perfect the victim that was sacrificed, so much the more complete was the atonement made. The principal perfections sought for were, that the victim should be *unblemished*, a *willing* sacrifice, and *costly*.

1. In the Mosaical books the direction is often repeated that the victim offered must be *without blemish*. It is forbidden to offer as a sacrifice any animal that has been born with some deformity, either by defect in some part of the body, or by its having something too much. The blind, the lame, or the sick, may not be offered to the Lord. The same exact care was taken by the heathen. The priest was required to examine, with strict scrutiny, to see that there was no blot or blemish in the victim. When a white bull was offered to Apis, in Egypt, if the priest discovered in it a single black hair, the victim could not be offered. This shows how severe were the rules of scrutiny in this respect.

2. Another thing which the ancients desired to behold in the victims was a willingness to be sacrificed. Amongst the Romans, if the animals, on their road to the altar, were restive, and struggled against those who led them, it was looked on as a bad omen. Oftentimes on this account the sacrifice was not proceeded with. If, on the contrary, they went willingly, and especially if at the time of the sacrifice they bowed the head for the stroke, then it was thought an omen of good. The priest struck them on the head with an axe or hammer; one of his assistants cut the throat, whilst a second received the blood in the appointed vessel, to be offered.

In the sacrifices to Moloch it was the custom for mothers often to offer their own young infants in sacrifice, and they hushed the cries of their tender babes lest their weeping might render the offering unacceptable. The sacrifices to Moloch were very cruel, and were made after this manner. The god Moloch was seated like a king on a throne. Before him, beneath his feet, was a pit of fire. He sat with his hands resting on his knees, the palms curved upwards. The statue itself was made red hot, and the victims being placed in his hands, rolled off into the fires beneath his feet. Every year there was celebrated the wedding day of King Moloch. For his bride was chosen a beautiful captive girl, ignorant of the customs of the country. She was prepared several months beforehand, being told that she was to be the bride of King Moloch. On the Feast day itself she was conducted in a gay procession, beautifully adorned with costly ornaments. Several other girls were given to her as bridesmaids or companions. On her road to the altar she was saluted by the people with great homage, and presents were made to her. She was full of joy, in ignorance of the fate that awaited her. Her joy was no real token of willingness to be the victim of sacrifice. It was but an apparent willingness, obtained by cruel deception. When she arrived before the altar, then what a horrible surprise! Then only was it that the awful truth broke

upon her of her appalling destiny. But vain were all her cries, her tears, and supplications. Quickly her rich ornaments were stripped away, and, spite of all resistance, she was placed on the lap of her dreadful bridegroom, whence she fell as a victim into the fires at his feet.

In Egypt there is a similar feast, called the marriage of the Nile. Formerly, a young girl, richly dressed, was drowned in the Nile; but now a statue of plaster, dressed up, and called the bride of the Nile, is thrown in in her place.

3. To the idea also of sacrifice, it belongs also that it should be costly. It must have, at least, some value. The more the cost the more favourable the reception. "I will not offer to God," said David, "holocausts free-cost." The sacrifices of the Jews, at their principal Feasts, were a great expense. So also of the heathen. Sometimes in Greece even a thousand oxen were sacrificed at once, and frequently a rich man offered a hundred at a time.

But the blood of bulls and goats, being that of animals lower than man, was by many not considered sufficient. For the expiation of human guilt human blood must flow, human life must be sacrificed. It must be made to flow in plentiful streams. The ancient Druids in England shut up in a network of osiers a hundred men. This basket was then placed on a vast pile of wood, and the whole of the victims were consumed by fire, a noise being made by

drums and other instruments that their dying cries might not be heard. In Africa, and in the islands of the South Sea, the blood of many hundreds of victims is made to flow, to appease their idols even in the present day ; and human sacrifices are still offered in some parts of India. The most civilized nations, such as Rome and Athens, offered human sacrifices.

The ordinary victims were slaves or prisoners of war. But in great calamities more costly blood must flow. The princes and magistrates in Phœnicia used, at such times, to bring the dearest of their children to be sacrificed. The blood of common men was not enough. It must be the blood of nobles and princes, the very best beloved of their children : and it was esteemed pious for parents to give with their own hand the death-wound to their children. In Homer's history of the Greek war against Troy, the daughter of King Agamemnon, the affianced bride of one of his chief lords, was required by the priest as the only acceptable victim for the gods. The prophet Micheas brings in Balach, King of Moab, as thus addressing Balaam : "What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy? Wherewith shall I kneel before the high God? Shall I offer holocausts to Him, and calves of a year old? May the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of fat he-goats? Shall I give my *first-born* for my wickedness, the fruit

of my body for the sin of my soul?" And in the fourth Book of Kings we read that the King of Moab actually took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him up for a burnt offering on the wall of the city.

In all these detestable cruelties there was still hidden a germ of truth, that, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. For this reason the priest usually confessed the sins of the nation or the offerer, transferring them to the victims by the imposition of his hand. In Athens a man was sacrificed every year, who was first loaded with the imprecations of the anger of the gods, that he might be as it were the scapegoat for the rest of the people.

4. The one only satisfying model of sacrifice had not yet appeared, which human nature craved for. There is but one sacrifice which completely fulfils man's idea of a perfect victim. It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In Him alone we find the true *unblemished* Victim. This faultlessness does not merely shine in that radiant beauty of form, by which He was the altogether lovely, fairer than the sons of men. It is characterised much more in the spotlessness of His inward purity, which enabled Him to say: "The prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not anything:"—which made Saint Paul say of Him that He was "holy, innocent, undefiled, and separated from sin-

ners:"—which made Saint John say that "in Him there is no sin." His was the *willingness*, which, when too high for suffering, brought Him to take a lower nature, for the very purpose of being a victim for the sins of men, which made Him able to say: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself;" which made Isaiah say: "He was offered because it was His own will." His is truly most *costly* Blood; not the blood of bulls and of goats, which cannot take away sin; not the blood of nobles or princes of the earth: but the Blood of the Son of God, the Blood of God Himself, Blood infinite in value, enough to atone for the sins of a thousand worlds. No new sacrifices are now required. This priceless one of Christ's is eternal and inexhaustible.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the salvation of mankind. A ray of pure light is shed from the Cross upon a ruined and degraded world. And this ray, by its quickening splendour, has lit up the earth, and filled it with glorious forms. In all things Jesus Christ is the pattern man, but as victim He is more; for it is as victim that He lifts human nature up into the loftiest regions of the Divine. He first wrought this marvellous operation in the Manhood He had assumed, and then, passing on the same glorious power to others, He transformed them into Divine men, making them to sit with Himself in heavenly places. It is by the grandeur

of the spirit of sacrifice that this transfiguration is accomplished. Never does the Divine beauty of our Lord Himself shine out so clear as in His Passion. So with His disciples. Never do they appear with such a halo as when voluntarily suffering things which nature abhors, whether in the horrors of persecution, or the saintly crucifixions of the higher life. In the countenances of the Martyrs and Confessors there is no stoic indifference, but the serene splendour of heaven glows there with dazzling ray. We forget the pains of flesh and blood: through impetuous admiration we pass beyond. We are entranced to see our poor human nature exalted in radiant grandeur to such heights by the power of the Son of God.

Give me, blessed Jesus, some little share of this spirit of sacrifice, that I may be changed into Thy likeness by the working of Thy mighty power.

CHAPTER IX.

The Five Porches.

THE sheep-pool, called in Hebrew Bethsaida, or house of sheep, was the finest and largest in ancient Jerusalem. It is the most authentic remnant of the days of Solomon. Here the sheep destined for sacrifice in the temple were washed. This pool measured fifty feet long by forty wide, being separated from the precincts of the temple only by a thick wall. It is now dry, partly filled up, and planted with flowers and fruit trees, tamarinds, pomegranates, &c. The arches are left on the west side, which do not, however, seem to be the porches spoken of in the Gospel. In the time of Saint Jerome two streams filled this pool, one white and limpid, the other red like blood.

By the water of the sheep-pool is signified the graces of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The five porches, in which the sick waited for their cure, symbolize the five periods of life in which an entry is more abundantly opened to these healing waters of salvation.

1. And the first period is that of early childhood. It is said that one half of the human

race die before they have reached their eighth year. Half that number die even before they are a year old. What multitudes, therefore, of baptised children, entering the waters of grace by this porch, are received with the dew of baptism unbrushed away, into the everlasting mansions. Numbers of others there are also, whose faults have been but childish faults, whose white robe was never stained with deadly guilt. Of all the five porches the roomiest is that of childhood. Children are hedged round by peculiar safeguards. Even evil men shrink from tarnishing the purity of a child. A defiled garment they trample on without remorse, but they hesitate to bring a spot on that which is yet clean. The helpless are thus shielded by a merciful providence. Their innocence, their simplicity, their trustful confidence, the very things which seem to leave them at the mercy of the bad, call forth mercy where mercy seemed not to exist. The better self, even in the wicked, is not wholly dead; and even bad parents like to have good children, worshipping in them what in themselves they have lost. So it is that children are kept from evil, and to find a thoroughly bad child is rare. The first porch of grace is crowded. Those forms of exquisite infantine beauty, which throng the courts of heaven, entered by this broad avenue. Children are very dear to our Lord. That fresh simplicity which character-

izes them is more attractive in His eyes than many a hard wrought virtue. He desires to have children in plenty around Him near His throne.

2. The second porch is that of youth. It is not so well filled. The reason is that free will begins now to have more play. The world invites, and our Lord invites. Our Lord is not wanting. He makes the heart dissatisfied, and gives it a nameless aching for some supreme good, which is Himself. Pleasures, after all, do not content; or, if they content, it is but for a brief space. Bitterness is mingled with them. That desire of love, to love and to be loved, of this also He makes use, soliciting the heart to fix its love, above all things, on Himself. All this He does, and much more; but the buoyancy of youth is against Him. Inexperience makes satisfaction to be looked for where it cannot be found. It is hard to turn the eyes from what looks so bright, so enticing, so real, and choose instead what is invisible. Still there are many who formerly were careless, but who at this period enter into the waters of life, and change for the better. It is a crisis. It is the turning-point of their lives. They choose the things unseen: they choose to be faithful, to be loyal. It may be they die young, or it may be they live long; but they entered the waters by the second porch.

3. The third porch is the period of mature

life. In mature life, even naturally, we become more steady, sober, settled. God uses these altered conditions for His own gracious ends. "Surely," He says, "it is God's turn now. The world has had its share of you. If you did not turn to Me before, at least turn now." And gaiety has now lost the bloom of its attraction. The passions have lost their vehemency and impetuosity. Besides, there is a sort of necessity to give good example to others. Induced, therefore, by these and such like considerations, not a few answer to the call of God; with feeble and laggard steps they enter the waters by the third porch.

4. And the next porchway is that of declining age. Grey hairs begin, not only to appear, but to prevail. The strength decays, the eyesight or the hearing becomes impaired. It is evident that life is on the wane. We are going down the hill, and at the bottom is an open grave. But what is there beyond? Can we endure the searching eye of God? Can we face the fires of hell? Is it not better now to make a virtue of necessity, and prepare ourselves for that great change, from which there is no escape? As the Angels laid hold of Lot's hands, while he still lingered, and so drew him out of Sodom and an inevitable destruction; so does God, by these good but imperfect motives, induce the old to seek the haven of salvation by the fourth porch.

5. There is another porch still, and it is the last. This is the porch of sickness that leads to death. There is a special grace for a death sickness. In a death sickness there is often such an utter slipping away of all life's energies that the soul is constrained to say, "This is death." It is amidst the ruins of an earthly life, thus revealed, that the soul rises up, all of a sudden perhaps, and is completely transformed, as it were by a stroke of lightning.

There are flowers that wait till night to bloom. The brilliancy of the day will not do for them. As the night wears on they open more and more their petals, and at dead of night they are spread to the full.* Then a smell, unutterably sweet, breathes itself forth, and steals through the thick air of night, with a strange and delicate perfume. So it is with certain souls. They show their charms, not in health, not under the sunny smile of prosperity and success, but in the dark hour of sickness; in poverty, distress, or persecution. Then their best qualities emerge from their hiding places, so that they become, as it were, transfigured. A light and glory appear in them that we never should have suspected to be theirs. We did not know them. The breaking up of all

* The Night-Cere, a native of Jamaica, begins to open at seven in the evening. It is full blown at midnight. The outer petals are of a rich cream colour, with an inner circle of purest white.

earthly hopes was required to set their souls at liberty: and now, in pain and trial, a new nature appears in them, formerly overlaid and stifled. Traits shine out which invest their forms with a radiating halo. A fragrance quite unearthly sheds itself round their path. They were cast into the fining pot, like so much rubbish and clay; they came out glistening with corruscations of dazzling splendour. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The fifth porch is sometimes reached, even in early life, the other porches being passed by. Not a few thus enter glorious into the eternal mansions.

6. It is said of the sick man in the Gospel that he had been a long time waiting for his cure. He looked about for a kindly hand to help him into the pool, and found none. How often it is that there are souls, with the best dispositions in the world, waiting for some one to take an interest in them; wishing to be guided heavenward; perhaps putting themselves in the way of some one whom they could trust, with the hope of being spoken to about the things of God. Just a little word would be enough, and that little word is never said. But shall they be lost for want of this kindly help? Not if they continue urgent in their good desires. Our Lord Himself will help them. He is the Friend of the friendless. Un-

noticed by all else, His eye singles them out, their very forlorn desolation commending them all the more to His love. His word of power sounds within the soul, working a cure where hope seemed on the eve of expiring.

I see, O Lord, that if I am not cured it is not because Thou hast not amply provided the means of healing. Behold how my laggard soul waits to enter the pool, ever wishing, but never attaining. That which my sluggish efforts fail to secure, be pleased by the overflowings of the riches of Thy mercy to effect, that, surprised by Thy goodness, I may magnify Thy name for evermore.

NOTE.

Of the human race:— $\frac{1}{4}$ die in 11 months;
 $\frac{1}{3}$ die in 23 months;
 $\frac{1}{2}$ before 8 years;
 $\frac{2}{3}$ before 39 years;
 $\frac{3}{4}$ before 51 years.

CHAPTER X.

God's Plan.

GOD has a vocation for each one of us. We sometimes talk as if vocation were the privilege of a special few. This is a false mode of speech, a false thought. God cannot spare any one. He wants each single one for the carrying out of some part of His vast design. It is not merely the shapely stones that are necessary for a building, but those that are unshapely. The stones that are hidden from sight are just as needful for the compact firmness of the edifice as those that show in an honourable place. But we like to appear; we like to shine and to be conspicuous. Perhaps this is not our call. If we are unnoticed and lost to outward view, we are not lost to the eye of God. We still form part of His plan. He has a use for us, and we have each of us a true vocation.

Nothing happens by chance. As a cloud of dust flies along the road each particle is directed by the providence of God for a particular end. A portion of the dust is taken away in the garments of the traveller; a portion enriches the vegetation of neighbouring fields; a portion

falls again to the ground, and is trodden under foot. And God directs each particle to its foreseen end in His own plan. Not a sparrow falls to the ground, says our Lord, without your Father. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. The lilies of the field are under God's care. He clothes them; and He it is that feeds the young ravens when they call upon Him. And we, who are of so much more value than they, can He forget us? Are we not much more the objects of His loving, careful solicitude? We are never lost sight of, not for a short moment even. God's attention is ever riveted on us every instant, as our pulses come and go. Our life hangs upon His providence for every breath we take.

When we look at a landscape, we see the whole of it vaguely. It is all reflected on the little mirror of our eye without perplexity or confusion. But we cannot see distinctly all that is there. For distinctness of vision we must concentrate our attention on a single spot. But God sees everything with distinctness, the small and the great, the past and the future, together with the present. He sees mankind, not only in mass, but each single individual. He beholds each one with fixed attention, and is intimately mingled up with each most trivial action, and even with every change of thought. God's attention to one person does not distract Him from the care of another, but without

weariness or perplexity He can manage a thousand worlds at the same time.

When God created the Angels, He brought them all into being in a moment. Instantaneously heaven was filled with bright beautiful spirits. But in the creation of mankind He acted otherwise. He made but one man and woman, from whom, in long process of time, in diverse ages of the world, the human race should gradually spring. In Adam all the rest of men were contained, as the full grown oak tree is contained in the acorn. Yet each has also a separate vocation, a separate destiny. The perfection to which each one is called is not, as in the case of the Angels, given after one crucial trial, but is a gradual formation under the Divine Hand. When we are born into this world, God has in His mind a certain premeditated perfection to which He designs we should reach. Just as an architect plans in his mind the building before he has even laid the foundation stone, or as a painter sketches in his imagination the picture he is about to form, before committing it to canvas, so it is with God in this matter; and, on our entrance into this world, He but waits for our co-operation to carry into execution the plan that He has pre-conceived. On our side it is a life-long apprenticeship.

We come upon the stage of this world, bringing with us our body and soul, that is, our-

selves. We come into the world one thing, but if we live long, we shall go out of it something very different. It may be for the better, it may be for the worse, but we shall not be what we were when we were born. Physicians tell us that the body is in a continual state of flux, losing and gaining, but never the same. It is so also with the soul. The soul is ever changing, either for better or for worse.

Our body and soul are ourselves. In them are summed up our natural character and temperament, our leanings to vice and to virtue, our intellectual capacities and talents. These are the raw material for the forming of our future self. This raw material varies considerably in different persons. Some seem virtuously inclined by nature. Grace takes easy possession of them, and its amber halo plays already on their sweet infant faces. Others, on the contrary, come into the world wearing the brand of the inheritance of evil stamped on their brow. Such as are more nobly endowed, more richly graced, may fling off temptation, as Paul flung off the viper that clung to his hand into the fire, and felt no hurt; whilst to the others the escape from sin is a fearful struggle, an agony of trial. To the one class the way of holiness is a terrible warfare, a rugged up-hill path; to the other, her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. God has not given equal aptitudes for virtue to all, but all can be

saved. The highest seats of sanctity are not bestowed upon all, but to all the gates of heaven are open.

Besides the inequalities of natural character and disposition, there are the no less important ones of early training and association. How happily circumstanced are some, nurtured in the bosom of pious families, where every lesson is comely and pure. In the race to heaven, the children of vagrants and thieves must surely be under terrible disadvantages, whose homes are homes of sin and vicious disorder, where the whole atmosphere breathes of corruption. It is as our Lord has said, to one servant is given five talents, to another two, to another one. All do not receive equal advantages. But none receive so much, either in nature or grace, as to compel them to be good; none receive so little as not to be able to work out their salvation. The gate of heaven is open to all.

It is certain then that God wishes us to get to heaven; but what place, what throne in heaven is prepared for us, that we know not. Even a life of notable sin does not preclude the possibility of a call to the loftiest heights of sanctity. Witness such Saints as Saint Augustine, Saint John of Beverley, Saint Margaret of Cortona, and many others. Whatever place it may be that God has made us capable of attaining, we ought to wish to reach it. We ought to desire that very place that God intended for

us when He brought us into the world, neither higher nor lower. We have deserved to lose it by our sins, but God still wishes His original design to be carried out. If we only give ourselves to Him without reserve, we shall yet receive the prize of our high vocation. We have sinned deeply, but that does not matter. We have wasted our past time in worthless folly, but we may yet redeem it. Nothing is irrecoverable with God. Nothing is beyond repair. God is only waiting for our complete surrender, and He promises to us, as to the Israelites of old: "I will restore to you the years which the locusts and the bruchus, and the mildew and the palmer worm have eaten." Years of wasted graces are waiting to pour their unused treasures into our bosoms. God gathered them up as we let them fall, and He has been keeping them in store for us against the day of our repentance.*

Our full restoration can, however, only be effected through a *worthy* repentance. It is one thing to repent, and another to do worthy penance. By a worthy penance our whole guilt is cancelled, and we are put back into the same condition in which we were before our sin. Such a repentance was that of S. Peter for his denial of his Lord. And when our Lord restored him, it was not a partial restoration, but a full one. He did not say

* See S. Teresa's Fourth Meditation after Communion.

to him, "I admit thee again as a member of My Church, but thou mayest no longer be an Apostle." He did not say: "I admit thee again to be an Apostle, but henceforth thou must be as the last and least of the Apostles." But fully and perfectly did our Lord reinstate Saint Peter to be the chief and prince of the Apostles, to be the first pastor of His whole flock, and to confirm his brethren.

The restoration of Saint Peter is but a type and figure of that complete restoration to all their lost privileges and graces, which our merciful Lord accords to all who turn back to Him with a perfect heart. Without it we need never hope to fulfil our vocation. God may mercifully save us, but never shall we come up to that ideal of pure bright beauty to which, in the gracious designs of His love, He had proposed that we should rise. And oh! what forfeits for us in the day of the resurrection!

CHAPTER XI.

Confession.

WHEN Adam had sinned by the eating of the forbidden fruit, the first step of his return to God's favour was by Confession of his guilt. A sad woeful day was that day of Adam's first transgression. Of all the days of his earthly pilgrimage, and they came to nine hundred and thirty years, there was no day to Adam so sad and dark as that. Even now a man's first great sin is an epoch in his life. He is another person. Nature itself seems changed to him. He burdens the earth with an unblest weight. But much more was it so with Adam: light was gone from his eyes. Paradise was really what it was before: the sun shone as bright, the rivers ran as clear, the fruits bloomed as fair, the birds sang as blithely, the beasts played as pleasantly, the flowers smelled as sweetly,—but not to Adam. One dark blot had ruined all. Sin had unparadised paradise. The mirror was shattered, and never again on earth could he see paradise with the same eyes. He had obtained his desire. He had broken the casket, and discovered the hidden secret, the difference between Adam in his original justice and Adam fallen,

man clothed and man naked ; and an appalling sense of his desolation spread itself out before him, measureless, a woe exceeding all expression : tears for it would have been a mockery.

As Ozias, when smitten with leprosy in the temple, made haste to go out, being frightened because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord, so Adam hurried away from the place where God was wont to commune with him, and hid himself amongst the trees of the garden. It was well that Adam hid himself. When Cain had sinned he did not hide himself, but boldly confronted the Lord, and said : "Am I my brother's keeper?" Adam hid himself by an inspiration of God's own Spirit. It was not that he thought he could conceal anything from the eye of his Maker. Adam knew well enough that all things are naked and open to Him. But he hid himself from a sense of his shame and misery. When we so hide ourselves God comes to seek for us.

God did not come to Adam immediately after his transgression, but He waited till the noon-day was past. God waited purposely. He did so that Adam's sense of sin might strike home and penetrate him to the very core ; that it might soak him, so to speak, with misery, and teach him, in ineffaceable lessons, how bitter a thing it is to depart from God. Adam could never forget that day. Years after it stood out before him fresh as yesterday. Then, when

God came, He first, as Saint Ephrem remarks, caused Adam to hear the sound of His feet as He walked in paradise at the afternoon air. It was by this that Adam's repentance was brought to its climax, his heart withering away with fearful apprehension of the coming judgment. But when God spoke, it was not so much with the accents of an angry Lord as with those of a mourning Father. "Adam," He said, "where art thou?" God knew well where Adam was, and what he had done; but He said this to open an easier road for Adam to acknowledge his guilt. He helped him, if one may so say, to make his Confession. There were as yet then no earthly priests, and God took upon Himself this ministry, stooping to His creature by the assumption of a creaturely form. When Adam had made his Confession, God gave him his penance, and, by the promise of the Redeemer, threw open the door of absolution.

That night Adam was driven forth from the garden of paradise into the outside wilderness. Behind him flamed the sword of the cherubim, guarding the backward path to that bright home, which to him was lost for ever. Alas! how by one little gratification this beautiful Eden had been forfeited beyond recall. Memory might go back and dwell on its serene sweet joys, but could never re-instate him in their possession. The fiery sword will never be

sheathed. Never again will the flowers of paradise bloom beneath his feet, nor its sweet breeze kiss his cheek, as whispering a blessing on his pleasing task of labour without toil. Never again shall he taste of those fruits planted by God's own hand, or drink the clear water of its crystal streams. All is over. The most passionate longing will bring back nothing of it. It is as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.

Paradise is lost for ever. Its portals are closed, and will never be again unbarred. But there is another paradise, prepared for us by God, whose gates are shut neither day nor night. The mountain tops of this better land can just be descried by the far reaching eye of faith. Its peaks are shining, tipped with golden light. It is open both to Adam and to us, and a good Confession is the first means for securing to our souls an entrance there. "A good Confession of sins past," says Saint Bonaventure, "is the beginning of future sanctity." It thoroughly heals the soul.

We read in the Gospel of a woman that had an issue of blood. She had had it twelve years, had suffered many things of many physicians, had spent all that she had, was nothing better, but rather worse; yet, when she had touched the hem of Christ's garment, she at once felt in her body that she was healed of the evil. Her touch took signal virtue out of Him.

Our Lord is still upon earth in the confessional. The multitude throng Him and press Him, but with little effect. Some people make bad Confessions. Many come in a very formal way, with imperfect dispositions. Devout people often approach to Him with little contrition. Our Lord is not looking for these. He is waiting for that soul that is thoroughly in earnest, that is determined to bid good bye to sin, that is bent on obtaining a perfect cure. She comes amidst the crowd. No one knows why she is coming, or what is her state. She takes her turn; she enters and touches the hem of Christ's garment: and at once she feels in herself that she has been made whole of her plague. A virtue has gone out of our Lord, and has cured her. She is already a different person, changed by the Right Hand of the Most High. What years of penance could not work, what her strongest efforts could not effect, the outermost hem of Christ's garment, the sacrament of the sinner, has fully accomplished.

Such a fruitful Confession was that of Saint Margaret of Cortona, three years after her conversion. Immediately after it she heard, in the midst of her heart, our Lord's voice calling her "*My child*;" whereas till then He had only spoken to her by the title of "*Poor little one*." Her intense contrition, joined with the sacrament, gained her this grace; but her integral

restoration to all she had lost took years to effect.

There are four defects which deprive Confession of its full efficacy. *First*, A sin omitted or imperfectly confessed. This acts like a drag on the soul. Josue, being defeated, made a close scrutiny of his army, and he discovered a man who had secreted a wedge of gold. When this man, *Achan*, was stoned to death, God's favour returned. An Achan is sometimes concealed in the camp of our heart. *Second*, Imperfect repentance of sin. People sometimes narrate their sins with beautiful historic accuracy, and subtle analysis, but sorrow is defective. There is no sovereign hate. *Third*, Want of an abiding sorrow for sin, which, according to Saint Chrysostom, enfeebles every effort of the soul to advance. S. Peter, it is said, to his life's end, wept whenever he heard the cock crow. Once sinners we are always sinners. *Fourth*, Want of a sense of pardon. "A sense of pardon," says Tauler, "deepens contrition." And Father Faber makes much of the value of "forgiven love." The defect of this comes from a want of humble confidence in God's free mercy, and a sort of proud unwillingness to accept pardon gratis. If we would get a good view of the new Paradise, and have our feet firmly set on the road thither, we must first rid our Confessions of these four defects.

CHAPTER XII.

Oblation.

A TRAVELLER that wishes to make sure of reaching his journey's end, chooses the safest road. The safest road to heaven is the way of perfection, and this is entered on by a full oblation of ourselves into the hands of God. A complete surrender of ourselves into the hands of God is, in fact, an abridged perfection. If our life is cut short, we have no time to accomplish anything, yet in this one act we have, in a sort, all that would have proceeded from it, God counting the will for the deed. In eternity a vast tree of glory will be the result of this one grace, as the oak springs from the acorn.

But an act of oblation sincerely made is a very martyrdom. Those who think it is easy have certainly never made it. Few people have the courage for it. If there were something definite to give, even although a difficult thing to surrender, one might nerve oneself more easily to the task. But in an act of oblation everything is comprised, and one knows not what God will take, or what He may not do. We are completely at His mercy, and perhaps

He will try us in the very sorest point, where it will most hurt us, as Job says: "*The fear that I feared hath come to me, and that which I was afraid of hath befallen me.*" The very thing we most shrink from, this may be just what God will require of us. If we were allowed one or two exceptions from our oblation, we might make it then with tolerable ease: but an act of oblation must have no exceptions, no reserves. It is an absolute, unconditional giving up of all, a surrender at discretion.

When our Lord became Incarnate, His first act, as man, was an act of oblation. "*Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God.*" The hidden life at Nazareth, the three years Ministry, the Passion and Cross, were the simple outcome of this one act. God received by this act the entire disposal of our Lord's life, and we see how He used that power. He did not spare. God gave to His Son a chalice exceeding bitter, and He was not content till His Son had drunk of it to the very dregs. This is what God did with the Son, with whom He was well pleased. And not only was it costly to our Lord when, in general, He at the outset made the offering of Himself, but, as each item of the sacrifice was given, at each He felt a fresh keen pain. But He never withdrew the oblation. Let nature shrink as she might, still was He firmly set to carry out all. "*The chalice,*" He says, "*which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*"

When Saint Paul was converted, his first act was an oblation of himself: "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" and our Lord, accepting the oblation, said: "*I will show him how great things he shall suffer for My Name's sake.*" All Saint Paul's after life was the outcome of that one oblation,—his labours and imprisonments, his journeyings and fastings, his prayers and his preachings, his stonings and his stripes,—the whole tree sprang out of that root. And, when *we* make an act of oblation, we must be prepared for all that may result from it,—all that God may possibly demand. We must be prepared for suffering of one sort or other. No cross, no crown. But how much suffering, or of what kind, is God's secret. It would not be good for us to know it. He will make all known in its own good time. It is enough for us at present to hear the words: "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."

An act of oblation, then, implies suffering. If it did not, it would be but a mere compliment, a high-flown sentiment, and nothing more,—*vox et præterea nihil*. It is this willingness to do and suffer things contrary to our natural inclinations, that constitutes what is called generosity with God. Strictly speaking, we cannot be generous with God, because all that we give Him is properly His own already. We are indebted to Him for every breath we

draw. We hang upon Him for each moment of our life. He has but to put forth His hand and cut the thread, and all is gone. We are absolutely and utterly dependent. But there are some things which God commands, others which He only counsels. When we are desirous to do, not only what He commands, but also what He counsels,—indeed His every wish,—then we make a true act of oblation.

God does not counsel every one to enter the religious state. Although the religious state is the best in itself, it is not the best for every person. We may follow the counsels of God for our perfection, and not enter religion. It is enough that we should be ready and willing to enter the religious state if God signified to us that that was His will for us. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, it is related of S. Macarius that, being desirous, after many years of austerities, to know how far he had advanced in perfection, he received for answer that he was now equal in merit to two married ladies who lived in Alexandria. Having sought out these persons, he found that they had each lived for fifteen years with their husbands in perfect union and charity, without a word of dissension. The Abbot Paphnutius, also, in the like case, received a revelation that his perfection equalled that of a certain great lord who, living in the world, let his lands at a reasonable rent, was hospitable to the poor, kind and peaceful, never

grieving any one. These Saints were greatly consoled to find that perfection does not consist in austerities, but in the fulfilling gracefully the duties of that state of life to which God has given us a vocation.

This perfection can, however, never be brought about without an entire surrender of ourselves into the hands of God. Those who wish to arrive at perfection in any art or accomplishment, such as music, painting, or sculpture, put themselves into the hands of some celebrated professor and doctor of the art. They do not trust their own natural taste or mode of execution, but they submit their taste and method to be formed under his guidance. They study in a school the works of the best masters, making their productions models for their own efforts to strain after, and thus, under the influences of high art, they rise to loftier conceptions, and a more finished execution. An apprentice who refused to be taught how to hold and work with the implements of his trade, would never make a skilful craftsman. So in God's school of virtue and holiness, the pupils must subject themselves entirely to His direction. He is the chief Master of the school, and spiritual guides are the ushers or under-masters, who prepare the pupils for His teaching.

Our subjection to God in His school does not benefit Him, but ourselves. On the birthday of Socrates all his pupils brought him presents.

When they had finished their offerings, there was left one poor young man, Æschines, who had presented nothing. Socrates said to him: "And what are you going to give, my son?" The young man answered: "Having nothing else to give, I give you myself." Socrates was pleased, and told the other pupils that Æschines had given him a costlier present than all the rest, because all that is outside of us is not so much as ourself. Then he told the young man that he would one day restore him his present, bettered and improved. So does God deal with us when we give Him ourselves. In paradise He will restore us the present, bettered and improved.

We believe this, yet we are quite afraid to pass out of our own hands into His. To cease to belong to ourselves fills us with vain chimerical fears. Some people are for years and years bargaining with God for some trifle, and cannot make up their minds to make the full sacrifice. Uneasy in mind at their own infidelity, they are miserable, and, for fear of another misery, they dare not take the step that alone could make them happy.

An act of oblation obliges us to three things: to *do* or *suffer* whatever God bids us do or suffer, and to *leave undone* whatever He bids us leave undone. Whatever our lawful superiors lawfully command us to *do* or *leave undone*, God also, *in our conscience*, at the same time, com-

mands us to do or leave undone. In obeying, we obey the inner voice of our conscience, we obey God Himself, who commands there. We oblige ourselves also, by an act of oblation, to obey all God's secret inspirations; to do or to leave undone anything we may lawfully do or leave undone, simply because He so inspires; as also to do or to leave undone something, that we may act with more perfection. In these inspirations, God's will is signified to us secretly in our own soul, but He never inspires us to go against our obligations, or to neglect obedience to our Superiors. We oblige ourselves, lastly, to suffer all pains, persecutions, and trials, brought on us wrongfully and even sinfully, without giving way to uneasiness, knowing that nothing can happen but by God's permission, and that all things work together for good to those that love Him.

CHAPTER XIII.

Perfection.

HOW blessed and happy are those souls that have received a call to perfection. David said of old: "Doth it seem to you a small matter to be the king's son-in-law?" If even earthly dignities have a grandeur that causes them to be eagerly coveted, how much more highly to be prized are those excellences, above nature and altogether heavenly, which become the soul's portion by a life of perfection. Beauty, and sweetness, and majesty, and grace, and an honourable place before God and His Angels, are all secured when perfection is gained. And these are not goods merely lent, or goods outside of our being, but they form a part of ourselves, and are to us a stable happiness, a joy that cannot be taken away. We have not to wait till we get to heaven, but part possession we enter into at once upon earth;—the hundred-fold for what we give up now, and the life everlasting in store.

The present portion which God makes over to those who follow the counsels of perfection, is a supernatural holiness, which pervades and permeates their entire being, raising them above

themselves by a sort of transfiguration. For, just as the fabled philosopher's stone transmuted, by its touch, all baser metals into gold, so does God really, by a mystic alchemy, work in the souls of His chosen ones. This it is which lifts up the poorest holy Nun high above all the grandeurs of the earth. Even queens behold her with a sort of worship, a sort of envy. They humble their souls in the dust before her, seeing in her call something far higher than the lot which has fallen to themselves. The prevailing influence of this grace of perfection, whose seat is in the centre of the soul, makes a complete change in the whole man. Nothing is subtracted from its subtle sway: just as when the ointment was poured on Aaron's beard, it ran down from thence to the very skirts of his clothing.

The outward look and movement follow the train of the heart, according to the words of Scripture: "*The heart of a man changeth his countenance, either for good or evil.*" The same book says, a little further on: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man, when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of a man, show what he is." Some people can wonderfully tell a man's character from a lock of his hair; others by a scrap of his handwriting; others by the lineaments of his face; others by the conformation of his brain.

It is said of naturalists that, give them one small bone of an animal, and they will tell you from it how all the rest are made, and build you up the whole skeleton. In man no action, no gesture, no movement, stands alone. There is a harmony of the whole, and the grand ruling principle of this harmonious whole is the heart. The holiness of the heart colours with its blessed tinge every most trivial gesture, action, and word.

Now in the world of nature and grace there is nothing arbitrary. Everything follows the rule of law. Souls that are condemned to hell seek their appointed place as the best for them. They would be more miserable in heaven, under the intolerable blaze of the light of God, than in their dark obscure dungeon. The citizens also of heaven have become meet for heaven whilst they sojourned here on earth. The stamp of Saint has been fixed on the face of the latter, just as the former are marked with the brand of the Devil, the shameful character of vice and sin. There are two processes by which man becomes holy,—grace within, and ascetic discipline without. These two work together, mutually helping one another, and affecting each the other. The changed soul changes the body, the outward obeying the inward; and again, the outward ascetic life forces a change upon the soul within, just as the kernel is influenced by the shell, and the shell in turn by the kernel.

The difference between the common Christian, and him who follows after perfection, is to be found in this, that the common Christian is content ordinarily, if he keeps God's commandments. Anything higher, over and beyond, is a rare accident. He, however, who pursues after perfection, habitually does many works of supererogation, which are not commands, but counsels. Without the observance of such counsels, the acquiring perfection is not possible. The counsels of perfection, thus *generally* taken, signify any good actions which exceed our absolute obligations; for instance, more alms, more prayer, more acts of penance, &c., than the commands of God and the precepts of the Church require of us.

But there are three counsels of perfection that are *particular*, that is, definite, specified things. They are poverty, chastity, and obedience. Under these heads come all the virtues of a perfect life. These are the three grand means of tending to perfection. A *complete* state of perfection is impossible without them. Those who would enter on a complete state of perfection must take the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In order to take these three vows, and so enter on the complete state of perfection, it is not necessary to enter a Religious Order, nor does the making of these three vows, when the vows are not accepted by the Church herself, constitute any

person a Religious, in the strict sense of the term. In a wider sense, all who bind themselves by vow to observe perpetually any one of the three counsels, are termed Religious by the interpreters of canon law. But these vows should not be taken out of a Religious Order without the very greatest deliberation, and with the sanction of one or more prudent and discreet spiritual guides, because out of a Religious Order there are not the same guarantees of stability or success. The faithful observance of the counsels in the world is more difficult, and should not be rashly undertaken.

However, in some cases sufficient guarantees can be given. Then, by embracing one of the counsels, the state of perfection is partially entered on ; by embracing the three it is so completely. The vow of poverty may be taken by persons in the world as it was practised by some of the ancient hermits in the early Church. They reserved to themselves enough to live on in a decent poverty. They had fields and vineyards of their own, the produce of which provided them sufficient sustenance. Persons who live in the world, and are bound to a vow of poverty, have a general faculty to use all temporal things according to their requirements. They may have money, may buy and sell, bargain and barter. They may give hospitality, and receive gifts. All they are bound to is to preserve the spirit of poverty, not going to great

cost for anything, and acting as stewards, not as true proprietors of what they seem to possess.

Some persons have a true vocation to perfection, in following one or other of the counsels, yet have no vocation to enter a Religious Order. In the life of M. Olier, we read of a young lady who had made a vow of chastity. Her parents wished to compel her either to marry, or to enter a convent. As she would not enter a convent, not having any vocation, they declared her vow was null, because she was not old enough when she made it to understand what she was doing. By M. Olier's advice, she suddenly one day knelt down in their presence, and pronounced aloud a vow of perpetual chastity, and so ended the controversy. Other persons have a true call to perfection, and yet by circumstances are unable to consecrate themselves to God in the Religious Order. They have not the health or strength requisite, or they have ties of charity which keep them in the world. By the observance of the counsels, these put themselves, as far as their circumstances will permit, into the road of perfection.

No doubt, where circumstances favour, and there is a true Religious vocation, a Religious Order is the safest and best road to perfection. In the Religious state, "a man lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more speedily, walks more cautiously, is bedewed more frequently, rests more securely, dies more confidently, is

purged more quickly, and rewarded more abundantly." Saint Bernard says: "It is very easy to pass from the cell to heaven, because one who dies in the cell scarcely ever goes down into hell." Those Communities, where the vows are only for one or three years nominally, share in these advantages. For practically the vows have a moral perpetuity, since few ever leave them for the world, and those who do so are dishonoured, being looked upon as apostates from a higher life.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Religious State.

THERE are three kinds of life on the earth. First, there is the life of flesh and blood, the life of the body, the life of nature. This life is characterized by our Blessed Lord, when He says that before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, planting and building. Then He adds, "and the flood came and swept them all away." And when He so adds, that the flood came and swept them away, it is implied that this life is sinful. Is it a sin, then, to eat and drink? No. Is it a sin to marry or be given in marriage, to plant and build? No. But it is a sin to make these things the aim of our life,—to live for them. The second life is that of the mind, the intelligence. This was the life of those Athenians who passed their whole time in hearing or telling something new. This was the life of the sophists, the disputers of this world, seeking wisdom, wrangling about questions. It is the life of the savants, the men of science of the present day;—the life of our enlightened nineteenth century, the life of man in his rational capacities. Our age supposes man can be

brought to his perfection by this life: thus the rage for spreading intellectual culture. But it is quite a mistake. The only true perfecting power is the third kind of life,—the Religious life.

The life of flesh and blood is *below* man, it is the life of the brute. The intellectual life is man's own proper life, as a rational being. The Religious life is man's life above himself, in God and the things of heaven. Some persons, restricting the first life within very narrow limits, and making a servant of the second, give intense efforts to the perfecting of the third life, and on this account are called *Religious*.

2. There are three principal motives for embracing the Religious life. The first is, to do penance for past sin. A severe Order is generally, but not always, chosen for this end. To those who enter Religion on this ground, the subjection, the restraints, the mortifications of the Religious life, are very disagreeable, but they are accepted as a penance for sin, so as thus to please God, overcome nature, and obtain salvation. The second class who enter Religion, are those who do so to preserve their innocence, who are not stained, at least very deeply, and who fear the world,—fear they may lose their souls in the world,—feeling how weak they are. The pious exercises of a Religious house, the good companions met there, the regular life, all lessen the occasions of danger and of sin, and

make goodness almost a happy necessity. For the third class the seclusion intensifies their spirit. By prayer and the good active life, their whole souls are set on fire, so that with them it is ever onward,—more purity, more holiness, more light in God, and burning love of Him.

3. The Religious life is thus a school, into which the pupils enter from different motives, and with different capabilities. All have not equal aptitudes, all are not called to the same degree of perfection. God does not expect the same amount of all, having given to one five talents, and to another two talents, and to another one. In an ordinary school all the pupils have not equal abilities, nor do we expect equal proficiency of all. So in this school of virtue and sanctity, we must bear with the imperfections we behold. We must not look for sanctity of those whose call is only to be kept from gross sins by the shelter of the Religious state. In teaching a person to sing who has a coarse, intractable voice, we do not expect ever to obtain exquisite results. We are content with a very moderate progress. So in Religion, when the gifts are not great, we must only expect a proportionate proficiency,—little from some, a good deal from others, and very much from just a few.

In the spiritual life, convents are like hot-houses, where God keeps His exotics of heaven—choice, rare plants. In a hot-house everything

is nicely tempered, according to the wants of the various plants it contains. When the air is too hot, there are shades to keep off the sun, and cool gusts are allowed to enter. If it is not hot enough, then means are found to make hot air, and to moisten that which is too dry. Everything is carefully balanced. Thus it comes to pass that flowers which could never endure the rude outside blasts, which would, if so exposed, quickly perish and die, thanks to the sheltering care of the hot-house, are able to put forth without fear their most delicate blossoms of exquisite texture.

Religious houses nurture within them the flowers of another country, the flowers of heaven. Many who would be lost in the world, not being fitted for it, and not having the graces to withstand its temptations, yet in the cloister become really saintly, shedding all around the delicious odour of heavenly virtue. Those, also, who are strong, reach an eminence that, with the hindrances of a worldly life, they never could have expected. In a Religious house everything is purposely arranged to lead upwards to God, so that by these appliances the advance is rapid and solid to favoured souls. Just as in a hot-house grapes are finer, and attain a maturity and a flavour that, under the most advantageous circumstances, is never reached in the open air.

5. Religious sanctity is gained by a three-fold sacrifice, typified by the three altars of the

ancient temple in Jerusalem. The first altar was in the temple court, open to the air. On it were sacrificed the bodies of the prescribed victims, which were destroyed by fire. This was the symbol of bodily austerities. The second altar was in the Holy Place before the veil. On this altar was burnt the purest incense to the Most High, and in this place were kept the sacred loaves or showbread. Here is the symbol of prayer and Holy Communion. Into the Holy of Holies the priest entered once a year, before the presence of God in the Shechinah over the Mercy-seat. He entered with blood, symbolizing the pouring out of our whole inner life before God and unto God as a sacrifice. The odour of the gross victims in its way to the Shechinah must pass through and be perfumed by the incense of the Holy Place; so our bodily austerities must be sanctified by prayer and Holy Communion to be acceptable to our Lord. But the best sacrifice of all is the blood of our heart, all that we value most, our whole inner life.

6. It is by these sacrifices that an ascent is made above self into a supernatural sphere: earth is purged away, and a sort of palpable influence of heaven takes possession of both soul and body. This spreads itself even to the places occupied by Religious, and they become embalmed with a hallowing unction. Secular people can pray better in a convent chapel. It

is our Lord's own home. He is there as the Spouse, amidst hearts that are wholly devoted to Him,—His entirely. The fresh flowers, the clean altar-linen, everything seems to speak of the loving hands that tend to all that concerns Him with an enthralling, affectionate worship. Even when the chapel is empty, it seems as though the prayers of the Nuns still filled the air, still floating there, just as the smoke of the incense wreathes itself aloft when Benediction is over.

The holiness of the Religious state not only affects those who are brought into immediate contact with it, but in hidden, mystical ways, it flows into and pervades the whole body of the Church, carrying its vigour and its grace to assist in their conflicts all the elect of God.

CHAPTER XV.

The Ascent.

WHEN Judith returned from the slaughter of Holofernes, the people of her city gathered round her with great admiration. That she might tell them what God had wrought by her hand, she went up to a higher place. This history may be applied mystically to a Nun on the day she makes her sacred Profession. She has slain the enemy. Her friends, the people of her city, gather round her, and she goes up to a higher place.

1. The Religious life began with the promulgation of Christianity. The first thing our Lord does on the commencement of His ministry is to gather round Himself a Community of chosen souls, who forsook all to follow Him. "*Lo! we have left all and have followed Thee.*" They forsook, not only goods, but wife and children, to be with Him. Saint John alone, according to tradition, was unmarried; and he even is supposed to have been the Bridegroom at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, forsaking his wife before ever he had possessed her.

That detachment from all earthly ties, which our Lord, when here below, laid down as

the condition of discipleship, He still exacts now that He is gone up above. And in every age He has found souls to answer to His call. In every age the pangs of loving hearts have been renewed. The tenderness of natural affections has had to yield to the inexorable, to the enthralling claims of supernatural love. O Thou heavenly Bridegroom, of what cruel suffering hast Thou not made Thyself the author? This unseen Lover steals His way into the happy homes of the wealthy and high-born, as well as of the lowly, and by His fascinating spell He leads forth thence perhaps the choicest and best beloved of all He finds there. He is not content with faded, sullied hearts, but He takes especially the young, where hopes are brightest, and beauty is in its freshest bloom. He fixes often on those who, by their talents, their grace and goodness, seem so fitted to shine in the world, and to shed such a sweet lustre on their high rank and station. And all these graceful qualities and accomplishments must be entombed in a Cloister, like a flower wasting its fragrance on the desert air. What a shattering of bright parental dreams!—what a crumbling into dust of beautiful air-castles. To earthly-minded parents, if they only knew that their beloved daughter was a wife and a mother, though in some far distant land, with no hope of beholding her again in this world, yet the separation would be less grievous, more toler-

able than to behold her embrace the Religious life. As a wife and a mother, she is still bound to her carnal relations by the kindred sympathies of a low and earthly life. But as the virgin-bride of the Virgin-Lamb, where is she? She is far removed; she is, as it were, lost to them. The supernatural aim and end of her life, this it is that appals their hearts. This it is that creates a terrific chasm between them and her, which they in vain essay to pass. Their pain reaches its climax when the time arrives of her irrevocable vow. In sorrow they gather round her, and she goes up to a higher place.

2. The Religious life is an essential part of Christianity, not an accidental phase of its system. Without it Christianity could not fully express itself in the lives of men. To do away with the Religious life is to do away with the most sacred liberty of a Christian people, the liberty of vocation, which implies the liberty of sacrifice. What is the Religious life but the spirit of sacrifice in living embodiment, a *tableau vivant*? It is that spirit of sacrifice of which our Lord was the primary model in its supreme perfection, and which He left as a splendid heritage to His elect in all ages to come. To do away with the Religious life is to cripple Christianity, to cramp its powers, to restrict it from showing itself in its perfect development.

Its highest aspirations have then no field for their exercise.

The Religious life is the life of heaven exercised here below. It is an unworldly, an un-earthly life. It is the nobler sentiments in man triumphing over his lower cravings. A holy malicious pleasure is taken in depriving this lower nature of what it likes, and of subjecting it to what it dislikes. It is laid in the dust. The higher self sits aloft enthroned, and, as a conqueror, puts her feet on the neck of her fallen foe, exulting over his ruin, and revelling in his complete subjection. This accounts for the absolute delight taken in mortifications, and in the doing of things repugnant to the lower nature. Such things are regarded as tokens of its subjugation, trophies of victory over it. The doing of them, therefore, fills the higher soul with glee and jubilation.

Of Religious, far more aptly than of ordinary Christians, may it be affirmed, in the words of Scripture, that their life is hidden in God with Christ; that their conversation is in heaven; that God has raised them up and made them to sit in heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. Applied to common worldly Christians these words seem strained and forced; but applied to Religious they are eminently true. For to Religious, their hopes, their fears, their joys, are all inextricably mixed up with the interests of heaven. They live in the unseen. They

have given up earth's goods, and have anticipated their eternity. They are really but strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

A Nun, who is about to make the Religious vow, is going to enter on this life of heaven, not by way of experiment, but in a stable settled manner. Those, therefore, that have already tasted how sweet the Lord is, are filled with joy at the grand event. There is one more spouse to be presented to Christ without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; another pure flower for that Beloved One "who feedeth among the lilies." One more loyal disciple, willing to spend and be spent wholly for the Master's service. One more soul escaped from the slavery of the world into the freedom of the heavenly kingdom. The older citizens, with a gladsome heart, send forth greetings of welcome to the new one about to ascend. They gather round her, and she goes up to a higher place.

3. Religious are the élite of mankind, the flower of the human race. The glories of both sexes are found assembled in graceful union in their persons. They have at once the courage and heart of a man, with the tender gentleness of woman. They are specimens of humanity in its perfect state. Saint Thomas says that, "in heaven, virgins will rejoice that they are virgins, though they never made any resolve of keeping their virginity; just as the innocent rejoice at being free from sin, though they never

had the opportunity of sin." (Sum. III. Qu. 96.) But it is chastity, wrought on and elevated by grace, which causes this wonderful combination of gifts, so seemingly opposed in character. Force and grace are thus united in one harmonious whole, and a supernatural halo illumines them.

As on earth so will it be in heaven. Everywhere in the Apocalypse we find a marked division of blessedness in the lot of the Saints in light. For it is one thing to stand before the throne of our Lord, and another to sit with Him on His throne, as He is set down on His Father's throne. It is one blessedness to be called to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and a much more excelling to be the Lamb's wife, clothed in fine linen, glittering and white, which is the justice of Saints. It is one degree of bliss to be of that multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples, and tongues; and a very much higher to be of the select company who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, who sing the new canticle which none can learn but they, who are without spot before the throne of God, and who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. The ancient Fathers, expounding that saying of our Lord to the Twelve: "*Ye shall sit on the twelve thrones,*" include in this number *twelve* all those who, after the likeness of the

Apostles, have forsaken all for Christ's sake. They shall be judges whilst the rest are judged.

It is only in heaven that Religious will show as they really are in their undimmed lustre. "Then," says our Lord, "shall the just shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." On earth their imperfections hide this lustre, both from their own eyes and from the eyes of others. Besides, earth is not their sphere, and the being on earth puts them at a disadvantage. Their glories are reserved for future display. They are like a covered picture or statue which the artist alone has seen. When they pass from earth the grand ceremony will take place of the unveiling of the picture before the assemblage of Saints and Angels. Then it is that the Saints and Angels, and their companions in Religion, gather round these elect of the elect, and they go up to a higher place.

O glory of glories! O only prize worth striving after! Gladly, O Lord, will I sacrifice all else if so I may attain to the happy lot of Thy chosen ones.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Ring of Espousals.

WHEN a Nun makes her Profession as a spouse of Jesus Christ, one of the things given her as a symbol of her irrevocable engagement is the ring on her finger. The heavenly Bridegroom is present, though unseen. He receives the vow she offers, and He answers with love for love. "I will espouse thee to Me for ever, and I will espouse thee to Me in faith." (Osee.)

The ring thus given is to be worn continually on her finger. It is the gage of her blessed Espousals. By it our Lord plights to her His troth, and she, receiving it, vows to be faithful to Him. This done she is no longer her own. She is His for ever. In the annals of the Saints we read of a certain holy woman of Canterbury, who was observed, shortly before her death, to regard with great attention a ring on her finger. Some who assisted her, seeing this, and fearing something of vanity, would have turned her attention from it. But she persisting, answered: "By this ring I am wedded to the heavenly Bridegroom, and I am considering if, in all points, I have kept true

fidelity to Him." In like sort does a Nun's ring of betrothal symbolize various ways, both the blessedness of her Espousals, and her own obligations to fidelity.

The ring is made of gold. But, to be pure, it must be smelted in the furnace with exceeding great heat. Then it is gold fire-tried. By the gold is signified the love borne by our Lord to His spouses, and by the fire the affliction of His bitter Passion and Death. Without this willingness to suffer, love is but a name, a bare sentiment. By the greatness of His sufferings the intensity of His love is guaranteed. Our Lord expects of His spouses a love at least in some respects like His own. Theirs must be a love superior to all accidental feeling; a love which shall continue faithful in dryness, and darkness, and want of all comfort; a love which shall make them embrace things quite repugnant to their natural bent for His sake. This is the crucible in which the true gold is parted from the dross, and from that baser metal, which glitters indeed like gold, but cannot equally endure the heat of the furnace.

Such is the substance of which the ring is formed, purest gold, symbol of purest love; a plain gold ring, no jewels on it, no incrustations, no blazoning of colours or enamel, but simple and unadorned. And why? Because love is by itself sufficient, as the Apostle says:

"Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and Saint Augustine: "Love and do what you will."

If we only love nothing else is asked of us. To his impatient disciples, who asked of S. John why he so continually repeated the lesson, "Love one another," he replied, "Because if you do this one thing it alone suffices." If we have all else without love, it is nothing. If we have all faith, if we give all our goods to feed the poor, if we give our body to be burned: yet without love all is worthless. But if we love, though our love have none of these ornaments, yet it is acceptable. Love alone suffices, without anything grand to show, as Saint Bonaventure said to Brother Giles: "An ignorant old woman, who loves God more than Brother Bonaventure, with all his learning, she is more precious in His sight." What our Lord wants is what He Himself gives—love. What He values is plain simple love. If we give Him our love He is content.

Such is the lesson taught by the plain gold ring. If the ring be of silver, as is the case with the Apostoline Nuns, it is love in the straits of poverty, or penitential love. Silver for its purging requires a hotter fire even than gold, and in the heat of the crucible it sends forth glittering corruscations. Its whiteness denotes also purity of heart.

The ring thoroughly encircles the finger on which it is placed. So it is that our Lord

places, as it were, round the souls of His spouses, a wall of love. He guards them by a particular providence, that no evil beast may come near to hurt them. They are to Him "a garden enclosed." By His ring of love He excludes all loves that interfere with His. Encircled by the arms of His love, these souls are carried through dangers which no one else dare encounter; for the everlasting arms are round them as a strong shield and buckler. His spouses embrace and cling to Him as the ring does to the finger. Their love for Him is a love of confidence. This confidence is entire. They surrender themselves, by a complete abandonment, letting Him do with them just as He pleases. It is enough that they are His. This fills them with a most sweet contentment.

Men of science tell us that the fourth finger of the hand is distinguished from the rest by its having a nerve in direct connection with the heart. This is the reason for its being chosen for the honourable office of bearing the ring of love. The finger shows the outward token of what the heart contains in fulness. It is erroneous to suppose the finger on the left hand alone has this nerve.* The right hand is justly chosen by the Church as more worthy than the left.

The love which our Lord gives to His spouses is a love of an unending circle. It never had

* See Brown's "Vulgar Errors."

a beginning. To each of them He says, in the language of Scripture, "I have loved thee with an eternal love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Its beginning, without beginning, is hidden in the deep recesses of the Godhead from all eternity, to last to all eternity. The love that chose them, and that drew them, will keep them for ever. The ring symbolizes this unending circle of love. Our Lord's spouses would wish their love of Him had had no beginning, like His own of them. Their creatureliness hinders this, but at least their love shall never have an end. As ages and ages go on, they will have the same round of endless love. Nothing but love. To love and be beloved is now all their life. It swallows up everything else. It is not that the love of the Bridegroom shuts out all other loves. Rather it admits them, and lifting them up to an alliance with itself, transforms them and elevates them, lending to them a share of its own excellence, as Moses and Elias drew their light at the transfiguration from the glory of our Lord. It shuts out only what is base and unworthy.

Rings have been worn in various nations from very ancient times. The book of Genesis mentions rings as worn by both Hebrews and Egyptians. Pharaoh King of Egypt gave to Joseph the ring off his hand as a sign that he made over to him his own power. Jezebel

sealed with Achab's ring the letters that doomed Naboth the Jezreelite. The ancient Romans wore rings of iron. The Romans burned their dead, and the iron, of which each human body contains a small quantity, was collected from the ashes, and made into a ring, which was worn as a memento of the departed. Rings of other metals are worn as preservatives against certain maladies. But of all the rings that have ever been worn, whether for ornament or dignity, as gages of fidelity, or any other cause, no ring is any way so precious, or so glorious, as that of a Nun, by which she is betrothed, not to some earthly nobleman, but to the King of kings, and Lord of lords. No ring means so much. For as the love of the heavenly Bridegroom is immensely greater than any earthly love, so He expects from His spouses a love that shall far exceed all other love. He expects it, and not in vain. He has had it from thousands of thousands. No one ever loved as He, and no one has ever been loved as He has been.

Oh, how Jesus Christ has been loved ! Thousands and millions have counted death and torture sweet for love of Him. It was delicious thus to have their love put to the test, to be faithful to Him under extremest trial. Their love of Him was full, far reaching, and intense, unutterable, transcending all description.

O my Jesus! this is the love I would wish to have; this I would wish to offer. For I desire to be Thine, wholly and for ever. Come Thou and take me. Whisper Thou into the ears of my soul: "I will espouse thee to Me for ever, and I will espouse thee to Me in faith."

CHAPTER XVII.

Three great Drawbacks.

WHEN we wish to serve God with a perfect heart there are three things that stand much against us. The first is our own inconstancy. With God there is never any change or shadow of alteration. But with us, alas! it is otherwise: we begin fervent, but fall back into coldness and negligence. God says to us, in the words of the Apocalypse: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, whence thou art fallen; and do penance, and do the first works." Our first charity is that great fervour of love that burned within us, when, at the beginning of our conversion, we gave ourselves to God without reserve. And God reminds us of it that the shame of our fall, urging us to begin afresh, we may by double earnestness redeem our lost graces.

It was for this reason that Almighty God said of old to the Children of Israel, "*Remember the day ye came out of Egypt.*" The day of our exodus from Egypt is the day we renounce the world. It happened once that a young man, wishing to enter a Community, asked a

holy Religious how he ought to live in it. He was answered: "See how you live in it the first day you enter, and for the rest of your life always do the same." It is as if it had been said to him: "Consider how humble you were on the first day you entered Religion; how ready to obey even in difficult and disagreeable things; how patient under reproaches, in hardships, and in toil. How modest and retiring you were; how earnest to correct your ways, and to recover all the time lost in the world. How little you cared for telling or hearing worldly news; how carefully you kept your mind from vain curiosities, and your tongue from evil speaking. Remember how you fled from all desires and actions of the flesh, rejecting them wholly, and offering yourself entire as a living victim, leaving no place in you for the life of sin. Do as you did then, unless, in the school of Religion, you wish to unlearn and go back, instead of marching forward."

Those who waste their time in a place of education, what do they discover on leaving it? No progress, and much expense. So if in Religion we find we were more fervent and pious in the days of our Noviciate than after many years of Profession, what a subject for shame and confusion! The Apostle Paul would say to us: (Heb. v.) "Whereas for the time ye ought to be masters, being in Religion so long,

ye have need to be taught again, like ignorant Novices, what be the first elements of the word of God, and how to begin to serve our Lord. Ye have need of milk, and not of strong meat." That is, you cannot endure hardships and rude trials of virtue, but have no more strength than a little child, that has to be managed by caresses.

2. The second hindrance to a perfect life is the influence of bad example. One diseased sheep will ruin a whole flock. Souls without energy, when, in a Community, they see some slack in the service of God, idle, breakers of silence, unsubmitive, &c., then they say to themselves: "If these things are permitted in them, why not in me too?" So they loose the yoke of discipline, and rejoice to be able to sin without blushing, having a shelter for their disorders in this miserable companionship. But the true servant of God says to himself: "Friend, wherefore didst thou come?" Why did you enter the Religious state? Was it to take pattern by the lukewarm, or to take up the Cross after our Lord? Was it to neglect the Rule, or to observe it with exactitude in all its points, so as to wipe out your sins, and, after this life ended, to inherit the heavenly kingdom? This is the end the true servant of God proposes on entering Religion. And, as an artist or a painter searches out the best models, that following them he may execute a

work worthy of praise, so the good Religious man sets before his eyes the examples of those who are fervent in virtue, that he may learn to excel in a saintly life. For those who lead a slothful tepid life, like the Sarabaites, their wearing of the Religious habit is only a living lie to God, and a base betrayal of their trust. But unless we stand on our guard it is easy to slip into the snare, for bad example has more force than good, many a beautiful vocation has been ruined by its power.

3. The third hindrance is discouragement on account of temptations and hardships. The Wise man says: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Join thyself to God, and endure." (Eccl. ii.) S. Paul certifies us that it is through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts xiv.) Even for our Lord it was necessary that He should suffer, and so enter into His glory. (Luke xxiv.) Tribulation is the road to the kingdom of God. To refuse to march on the road is to refuse to reach the goal.

At the outset, spite of the helps of grace, the Religious life is felt to be exceeding hard sometimes. The deprivation of the artificial comforts of a worldly life costs no little, but the restriction of liberty costs much more. The tower of perfection cannot be built for nothing, as our Lord plainly teaches. But as habit is a

second nature, the new mode of life by degrees loses its unpleasantness, and even becomes quite agreeable. Grace also assists to this end.

But again, when we have had experience of the Religious life some few years, another crisis comes, at which time special effort is required to keep ourselves from falling back. When Saul was first made king he was little in his own eyes: he was, it is said, "a *child* of two years old." But when he had been in power a few years, all these nice dispositions vanished. So when a Religious gets to feel of some authority and weight, or is put into an office of trust, then old vices of character, that had lain dormant, begin to put forth their heads quietly. They think to escape notice, because they come slightly tinted with a religious coating, to suit the new state; but really at bottom they are the old man. Thus come temper, pride, ambition, avarice, &c., lying in ambush. We must take these suggestions in their infancy, and dash these Babylonish children against the rock.

At a later period, when health begins to fail, or the infirmities of age come on, a great temptation is often felt to come down from the cross. But our Lord remained on the cross till He was dead. The good Religious man does the same. Some indulgence is to be given to infirmity, and to the weakness of age, but with measure and moderation. For the

good Religious man resists the desire to come down from ~~the cross~~. After so many years of an unworldly life, is he to die in the soft mire of earthly comforts, like a ship, after storms and trials, heaving its cargo overboard just when nearing its harbour? Yet there are who so do: whose bright lamp, a few years perhaps before they go, is quenched in the darkness of lethargy and sloth, and who pass from earth leaving behind them an ill savour, instead of the good odour of Jesus Christ. .

BOOK II.

ON THE JOURNEY.

"Make the way known to me wherein I should walk."

Ps. cxlvi. 8.

Book the Second.

ON THE JOURNEY.

CHAPTER I.

Conversion of Manners.

IN order to advance on the way towards heaven, we must give ourselves wholly to our Lord. We must not be content with making an act of oblation once, we must make it again and again, many times. We must indeed never be content till we have palpable proof that God has accepted the offering. God will show that He has taken possession by beginning in us a conversion of our manners. Often when people offer themselves to God it is a mere pious form of speech. They never mean that God should take them at their word. If He did they would bitterly repent, and speedily withdraw back the offering. God knows this, and so He does not even take it at all. God is not hasty in taking us at our word. He often waits a long time, proving whether we really are in earnest, and turns away from our oblation, as if perhaps He

distrusted us, or as if He did not care to have it. We do God no favour in giving ourselves to Him; the favour is that He should vouchsafe to receive us.

Conversion of manners is not, like conversion of heart, a sudden thing. It is a gradual change, worked bit by bit. In the conversion of the heart God changes us at once out of a state of sin into a state of grace. It is a thing which cannot be done by halves, as if we were partly in a state of grace, and partly in a state of sin. God pardons us, and sanctifies us, and justifies us, in one and the same act; and we are changed from death unto life. But conversion of manners is done piecemeal, here a little and there a little, till the whole is finished. Sometimes at first conversion, or when entering Religion, people are so good that you would think they were Angels. But wait a bit. The old Adam is not dead. Spiders sometimes roll themselves up and feign death that they may be let alone; so it is with the vices of the old Adam. They are too deeply seated to be wholly rooted out in a moment. The principal root is gone, but the fibres still remain. To destroy them as they appear, this is the work of our second conversion.

Rome was not built in a day; so holiness is not perfected in an hour. Wounds are easily taken, but not easily cured. Bad habits and vices are compared to dross, which can be

wholly purged out only in a fiery crucible. There must be many a tear and many a sigh, before our vessel shall be so purely refined as to be meet for the Master's table. Nero said he wished the Roman people had but one neck, that by one stroke of the axe he might kill them all. So impetuous natures would wish to destroy all their vices with the effort of a single stroke. But such is not God's way. God's way is gradual; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Fruits quickly ripe are quickly rotten. So a hasty sanctity is to be suspected. It shines like a brushwood blaze, splendid for the moment, but alas! speedily quenched in darkness.

We must not then be discouraged if we do not get on so fast as we could wish. The most valuable timber is not of rapid growth. Demosthenes, who became the most eloquent orator of ancient Greece, had to rid himself first, by years of labour, from his natural defects. It was a long and painful apprenticeship; but he succeeded in the end. In rowing up a stream the current is so strong in some spots that we can make but little way. When these places are passed, it is easier work; so is it in the spiritual life: but the very perseverance of efforts after good is a progress, because we are made firmer thereby in the habit of resisting evil. Thus not to go back is to go forward.

The entrance gate, however, into the road of

perfection is the narrowest and most difficult part of the road, especially when the first fervour is over. A bullock unaccustomed to the yoke frets under its burden at first, but by and by takes no notice of it. A new shoe, though made well to fit the foot, is not so easy to it as an old one, some time worn. We are creatures of habit, and to have to alter our mode of living and acting is never pleasant. Much less is it agreeable to adopt a stricter rule of life. But, after all, our worldly wants are for the most part artificial. Plain food with hunger is as appetizing as the greatest dainties. The taste itself, when less cloyed, becomes more delicate, and finds a savour where once none was perceived. Nature is content with little, and grace with less. In the virtues, also, the close-fisted man, having once opened the strings of his purse, finds the second opening less difficult, and so by degrees, from a niggard becomes liberal. The passionate man, repressing bursts of anger, becomes gradually more meek. The chatterer, by guard of the tongue, becomes less fond of talking. And so of the rest. The way of asceticism and virtue is somewhat irksome at the outset, but it becomes, by new habit and by grace, comfortable and pleasant.

A true conversion of manners has *three* characteristic marks.

First, it is *habitual*. Relapses in part may more or less occur occasionally, and imperfec-

tions; but, to be sincere, conversion must form a new stable habit. One swallow does not make a summer. One extraordinary act of virtue does not make a Saint. To be sometimes sensual, at other times mortified; sometimes nice mannered, at other times disagreeable; is not a true conversion. True conversion is, at least in the main, permanent, abiding, habitual.

The *second* mark of a true conversion is that it is *universal*. If not so at once, it at least tends thitherward. It takes in the whole cycle of virtues; advancing ever onward from virtue to virtue it goes, heaping up more wealth, adding field to field, never content. Alexander, when he had conquered the whole world, wept because there was no more to conquer. It is not so with the soul. There are always fresh countries, which God opens her eyes to behold, undiscovered continents, new worlds, which He invites her to bring under her dominion. No peace or league is to be made with any of the old inhabitants of the land. The war is one of utter extermination. The extermination is, however, to be gradual. In the Promised Land, till the time of David, Jebus still held the stronghold in Jerusalem. David cast him out. But to be stably good in some points, and stably bad in others, is not a true conversion of manners. To be good at fasting, but not good at prayer; to be good at silence, but bad at obliging others; to be good at labour,

but not prompt in obedience; is not true conversion. Sweet water and bitter should not come from the one fountain, good fruit and corrupt fruit from the same tree. These are flaws in the jewel, and, like coarse dark threads, ruin the beauty of the fabric.

These two first signs may suffice for ordinary conversions. Some persons set before themselves a moderate standard of virtue, and go higher they will not. They are quite content. They do not will any absolute perfection, and they are determined not to be driven. Truth is they can neither be led nor driven. A change, if change there ever comes, must be within, and from God. These imperfect souls are to be borne with, and not pushed unwillingly up the heights.

The *third* sign of entire conversion is a *gracefulness* in virtuous acts. Beginners in virtue do what is good, but awkwardly and stiffly. They walk, but they walk on stilts, in an ungainly manner. This mode is sometimes also the result of a rigid character, or of the teaching of rigid books. A piece of music, when played by an unskilful hand, though the correct notes are given, and in correct time, yet it is but a cold dead thing. But in the hands of a true musician, how it changes its face. How it thrills us by its grandeurs, how it melts us by its plaint. We are transported out of ourselves; we go we know not whither, captivated

by its charm. When such a musician takes his harp, and sweeps with his hand over the chords, he at once and without effort fills the air with the most delicious enrapturing sounds. So is it with the Saints and saintly persons in their acts of virtue; they are done with such a sweet ease, with so charming a gracefulness, with such exquisite propriety, as quite to silence the tongues of fault-finders. When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his foes to be at peace with him. The perfection of virtue in saintly souls casts its spell outside, and by the beauty of its holiness enthralls the heart, filling it with admiration.

However, even great saints have some defects or strong violent temptations. Some wondered why Saint Gertrude was so dear to our Lord, seeing she had certain palpable defects of temper. God suffers these things for the good of humility, that out of an evil root He may bring a most sweet flower. Tauler says that God rarely raises souls to a high degree of favour but after some previous fall. S. Paul, when lifted up to the third heaven, had a thorn in the flesh to buffet him and keep him humble. In nature we see the same. The peacock has beautiful plumage, but a hideous voice. The swan has the whitest of feathers, but a black skin. These occasional defects should humble but not discourage us. Our garden is naturally a desert heath, and God leaves in it a patch of

ground uncultivated yet, to show us what the rest would be like but for His grace.

If, however, the two first characteristic marks of true conversion are lacking to us, we may feel sure that something is amiss. When a tree is rich in plentiful blossom, yet scarce here and there any fruit abides on it, then let the gardener take it up and examine the roots. He will pretty certainly find that the strongest roots strike down into a bad barren soil. These strong roots must either be cut off, or their direction so turned that they no longer penetrate to draw sap from that corrupting ground. The soul that has good desires, and not the fruit of true conversion, has its strongest roots still fast in worldly things, or in self-willed, self-chosen ways. Never will she bring forth fruit in holiness till these roots be cut off or their direction turned.

CHAPTER II.

Guard of the Heart.

IN order effectively to advance our conversion of manners we must keep a great guard over our heart. The heart is the grand fountain spring of all that is good or evil in word or work. As our Lord has said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And again: "From the heart come forth murders, adulteries, thefts, and the like." As our heart is, so is our life. If we would correct our life we must first reform our heart. But in order to reform our heart we must know our heart in itself. We must watch its movements, must examine what comes in and what goes out, and what abides there. "Know thyself," was one of the wise sayings of ancient Greece, engraved over the gates of the Delphic temple. This self-knowledge is obtained by examining what are the *desires, hopes, fears, and regrets* of the heart. You grieve for a certain loss; your heart is disturbed. You thought your heart was detached, but this grief proves that it was not. And so of the rest. Thus we get to know our *attachments* by examining our *desires, hopes, fears and regrets*.

The next point to be examined is the *natural bent* of our heart. For what is done by natural inclination tends to run to excess, and what would have been a virtue becomes by excess a vice. So says S. Bernard. People often canonize their vices, and pay to them great homage and veneration. Wastefulness they call generous liberality; niggardliness they call a love of holy poverty; selfish slackness to correct others is termed a mild charity; cruel severity is called a holy zeal for discipline and good order. We sometimes esteem vices a happy possession, and indulge in self-complacency and self-glorification on their account. But what we esteem is in God's eyes a foul blemish. The chameleon, so as to be unperceived by its prey, takes the colour of the leaf on which it sits. So the devil colours his temptations, drawing us to vice, as Hugh of S. Victor says, according to the bent of our nature. But true virtue lies in a happy middle between two extremes.

A third point in the guard of the heart is to find out the *motives* of our actions. Imperfect souls fancy sometimes that they do their good actions wholly and simply for the glory of God. Yet our Lord is well pleased, if, amidst much rubbish and metals of less value, He find one or two grains of this gold. A man often, who builds a church, does so partly for the glory of God, partly for the good of his neighbour, partly for his own comfort, partly for self-glori-

fication, partly to satisfy his taste, &c., &c. A host of motives convene in the same act. Motives that savour of sin we should eliminate without quarter. Imperfect motives, or of lesser good, may be suffered. How far must depend on our vocation, and the inspirations of God. All are not called to equally high degrees of perfection. Some require a larger, some a smaller admixture of less perfect motives in their good actions. If compelled to act from the purest motives only, many would simply abandon a good life altogether.

Refiners have fixed at twenty-four carats the highest perfection of gold. But do what they will they are unable to reach this standard by a quarter of a carat. The standard of money is twenty-two carats, the other two being silver, or some other metal which cannot be purged out. Gold of eighteen carats is considered very good jeweller's gold. As gold is proved by the crucible, and the amount ascertained of admixtures with it, so are our motives proved by the guard of the heart in the light of God; and we learn how far our actions are done from the love of God, and how far from lower motives. If our gold is considerably mingled with less precious metals, let us have the humility to confess it, and so by our gain of humility reimburse ourselves for our losses. Let us not be like those insincere persons who have two motives, an ostensible and a secret one,—a top-current

for the glory of God, and a strong under-current of self-seeking,—who are hot for the glory of God when self-aggrandisement and personal display are connected with it, but impassive at other times. The glory of God covers many a hunt after lower satisfactions. That craving for church-gossip which religious persons sometimes have; is it that they may find objects about which to pray? Many a piece of base coin is detected by the guard of the heart. In India, when a large sum of money is paid, a money-receiver is hired to take it, whose practised fingers at once with subtlest touch distinguish any false money. In spiritual matters this office is fulfilled by the guard of the heart.

A fourth advantage of the guard of the heart is that thereby the *roots* of our sins are laid bare. If anger has arisen the soul examines to see why. One man is angry because he has been cheated of a small sum of money: avarice is the root. Another because he is despised: pride is the root. Another is angry because his dinner has been badly cooked: sensuality is the root. The covetous man is not angry at being despised, nor the sensual man for being robbed of a small sum of money. But the root of the disturbance is different in the two cases. Now to be sorry for the anger only will not profit much. It is the root of the anger that should be destroyed. So long as that vile root is suffered to abide, it will put forth its thistly

leaves. Wither it up and the leaves will vanish too. This withering of the root is effected by four things: 1. Detestation of it; 2. Acts of the contrary virtue; 3. Prayer against it; 4. Rising above it into God.

The guard of the heart is exercised in various ways. Its lowest degree is the ordinary examination of the conscience once or twice a day. The second degree is to prepare ourselves specially for each action of the day, and examine ourselves on how we have performed it at its close. Saint Ignatius, hearing that a certain Brother examined his conscience often, asked him early one morning how often he had done so that day. The Brother answered: "Seven times." "Only seven times," replied Saint Ignatius, in a disappointed tone. But the third degree is that spoken of by Saint Benedict as the first degree of humility. This guard is to be continual, all the day, over every word, action, and movement of the will.

The method of exercising this guard may be explained by that which is found necessary in many trades and occupations. A sempstress, when hemming or seaming, runs her eye from time to time over her work, to see that the stitches are made at equal distances, that they are even, not some large some small, some tightly drawn others slack; for a few bad stitches would disfigure the whole work. A builder builds by his line, and looks from time

to time to see that his work does not get out of the perpendicular. Without this care his building would be ruinous. An artist keeps often in his studio a masterpiece for years before it satisfies his eye. To an unskilled taste it is already beautiful, perfect. But his purer light discerns that it is still far from what it ought to be. Nor does he know all at once what it is exactly that is wanting to it. Little by little, with delicate touches, he brings it to some accord with his high ideal. A sentinel's watch, at the outpost of a camp, is not more strict than this guard of the heart should be; for the hearts of some people are like a public inn, open without question to every comer.

In keeping our guard it is well to consider our actions from various points of view. If we saw *some one else* doing what we are doing, what should we think of it? Or if some one else saw us, what would that person think? Bystanders see more of the game than the players. Others form a correcter estimate of our actions than we do ourselves. They are disinterested spectators: self-love blinds us. We see faults plainly in others, which they will not allow to be there. And doubtless there are faults in us which we do not acknowledge as such. We should also look at our actions as the Angels look at them, as God looks at them, as our Lord looks at them from the Cross. By getting out of nature into the domain of grace

we form a truer judgment. By the brightness of a sunbeam shining in at a window we sometimes behold in the air particles which the ordinary light of day did not discover to our eyes. So God's brightness sometimes shines on some chance word or action of ours, and makes it to us a revelation of some point of our character, some defect which had hitherto lain hid in the shade. True and perfect self-knowledge comes only by the light of God. "*Noverim te noverim me*," cried S. Augustine; "Lord, let me know Thee, and let me know myself." David says: "Look well, O Lord, if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way eternal." David does not mean to say that God does not know all things; but by this form of expression he begs of God to make known to him by His light his own most secret defects.

One of the ways, also, by which we may learn the character of our heart, is to watch our words. Our Lord says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The tongue is a useful member in this way, because it betrays the secrets of the heart. Unbidden words of love tell of a heart filled to overflowing with tenderness or charity. They are sparks leaping forth from its huge fire. But curses and blasphemies are sparks from the fire of hell that burns in the soul. They are words fit only for devils to utter.

CHAPTER III.

The Books of Judgment.

WHEN we review our conduct, and desire to ascertain if we have made any advance in the conversion of our manners, we naturally look about for some standards by which to judge ourselves. The standards we ought to take should be those by which God Himself will judge us at the last day. Then the Books shall be opened, and men shall be judged according to what is written in the Books. The Books are the books of God's law, as made known to men. At the Council of Trent the books laid on the table were, the Bible, the Decrees of Councils and Popes, and the Summa of S. Thomas. These were to be the standards of doctrine. What was not in conformity with them was to be condemned. So by the Books of God's law we may discern in our conduct the good from the bad, and separate the precious from the vile.

There are two Books that are universal, the Books of Creation, and of Conscience. The one manifests God outside of us, the other within the soul. They are given to all. All will be judged by them. The Book of Creation sets

forth the power, the wisdom, and Godhead of the Creator. The heavens declare the glory of God, so that those are inexcusable who serve the creature instead of the Creator. For God has not left them without witness of Himself, calling for the homage of all by His goodness in giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. The Book of Conscience also, though its writing be obscured by evil custom, has a sufficiently clear witness. Its voice either accuses or defends each action; and by its law shall all men be judged, the secrets of the heart being laid open.

The third Book that will be opened is the Book of Revelation, of which the Jews have a portion, Christian sects a larger share, and Catholics the whole. By God's revealed law the natural conscience receives a large accession of light. Old truths now stand out clear and more distinct. New truths are unveiled to view. To whom much is given, of the same will much be required. He who sins in comparative ignorance will be beaten with few stripes; but he who sins with a full knowledge of the Lord's will will be beaten with many stripes. A sublimer sanctity is to be looked for from those who are enriched with the wealth of clearer knowledge and a holier law.

The fourth Book that will be opened is, according to Saint Gregory, that of the lives of the Saints. By them God will show what men,

with like passions as ourselves, and the same flesh and blood, have done with *less* graces and advantages, so that we shall be without excuse. In them we behold God's laws written, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart, and in the actions of a holy life.

And the fifth Book that will be opened is that of God's hidden inspirations to the soul. No one knows these but the soul and God. They are a secret between Him and her. No one is left by God in a state of mere nature, but outside the Church as well as within, His grace sweetly waits upon every one, soliciting to good and restraining from evil. As pour the waves of light from the sun in richest plenty, so does God's grace come upon each soul. It comes like an impetuous gush of waters from some strongly welling spring, overtopping all the appointed channels, and everywhere spreading itself in lavish waste. God gives His rains not merely to cultured spots, but spreads them as if in vain on the sea and on fruitless sands. Yet all serve a purpose known to Him.

It is by the good use of inspirations that the sublimest perfections of the spiritual life can alone be reached. For through these touches the Sovereign Artist gives to the character and actions of His chosen ones that delicate gracefulness which is so sweet and exquisitely charming. Where these inspirations are neglected our Lord can do no mighty works. They work

their effect, partly by enlightening the understanding, and partly by pushing the will to action.

On many occasions our ordinary lights are not sufficient, and we ought to petition continually for higher, purer lights, so as to see things something in the manner that God sees them. "Send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me." Samuel was a prophet. But the prophetic light was not a possession of his own, which he could use at his pleasure. He had to depend on God for it. When God did not give it he remained in his natural ignorance. In this ignorance he had thought that Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, was God's chosen king. Nathan also, when David first told him that he wished to build God a house, approved the design, and told him to do so, for the Lord was with him: but that night God told Nathan that it was not His will that David should build Him a temple. If these prophets were sometimes ignorant till a special light was vouchsafed, how much more must we expect to be deceived, thinking that to be God's will which really is not so? We must ever inquire of God before action, striving to look at things in His light. Because Josue once did not inquire, but trusted to ordinary lights, he fell into the snare laid for him by the Gibeonites; and through giving credit to their plausible words, he made peace with a people that should have been destroyed.

Besides looking for light from God, not only when we are in a difficulty, but as a help in all ordinary occurrences, we must also abandon ourselves wholly to His guidance. For, as God instructs each soul in private, over and above the knowledge she has of her duty, through the ordinary channels of revelation, so also He pushes her within, by mystical movements in the soul, to the performance of His will. God wishes the soul to be entirely at His beck. An apt figure is given of this in His conduct of the Israelites in the desert by a cloud. The children of Israel had to move their camp whenever the cloud moved. Whithersoever it led the way they had to follow. Sometimes it moved at midnight, sometimes in the daytime; at one time in the morning, at another as the sun went down. But whenever it moved they struck their tents and followed. Sometimes it stayed in the same place a year, sometimes a few months, a day, or only an hour or two. If it remained a year they remained a year, if only an hour they remained only an hour. If it went to the right they went to the right, if to the left they followed to the left. They were utterly abandoned to its guidance: and so should the soul be to the guidance of the inspirations of God. She should have no lights, no movements of her own. All should be borrowed from Him. As a leaf is the sport of the wind, so should the soul be abandoned to the direction of God. A

leaf is taken up and whirled this way or that, set down, and again shifted to some other quarter. It obeys every impulse it receives unresistingly.

Some persons neglect inspirations lest they should become scrupulous. But scruples differ widely from inspirations. Scrupulosity is a groundless and painful fear of committing *sin*, mortal or venial; a fear of breaking God's commandments. But fidelity to inspirations has no concern with *sin*. It concerns itself, not at all with the *commandments* of God, but only with His *counsels*, suggested to the soul in the secret of the heart. Fidelity to inspirations is indirectly the best remedy for scruples, by sweetly raising the soul, without tumultuous fears, to rid herself of all imperfections. Inspirations may be classed under *four* heads: 1, To do a thing less perfect in itself, viz., less mortified, but accidentally more perfect, because more discreet. 2. Where a matter is of no importance in itself, but there is a strong inspiration to do or let alone something, to follow this impulsion simply, so as to become pliable and supple in the hands of God, complying with every indication of His will. 3. Of two lines of action to choose the safer. 4. Of two good actions to choose the more holy.

Those inspirations which are of no great consequence, it is best to act on at once without consulting any one. But in graver matters nothing should be done without the sanction of

authority. In Communities, even a small thing that is observable, should never be done different from the practice of the rest without sanction. Whatever is thus offered to God, says S. Benedict, without permission, will merit no reward from Him. If God appear to counsel us one thing, and our Superiors tell us to do another, we must always follow the voice of our Superiors, not the inspiration. When our Lord in a vision told Saint Teresa to do a thing, and her Confessor forbade her, she obeyed her Confessor, and our Lord told her she had acted rightly in so doing.

To disobey an inspiration is not a sin, for inspirations are counsels, not commands. Still every time we disobey we lose so much perfection. We also lose our peace of mind because our Lord does not fail to reproach in their conscience those who are ungenerous with Him in this matter. And if we continually persist in this evil disobedience He will let us sink down to a lower terrace, withdrawing from us His special guidance and providence, and giving us only common graces. It may happen sometimes that our salvation may depend on our fidelity to inspirations. The scale is sometimes turned by a single grain. A downward course to hell may be begun by infidelity to inspirations; and certainly nothing will help us so unerringly on our road to Paradise as the being faithful to God's holy inspirations.

CHAPTER IV.

Manifestation of the Heart.

BESIDES the continual guard of the heart, it is of great profit, from time to time, to make a *review* of our state before God, manifesting this to some person in whom we have confidence, so as to obtain counsel and succour. The best person ordinarily will be our Confessor, or our Director; but sometimes we may get assistance from other friends. The Dominican Tauler was greatly helped by a devout layman. The celebrated Mary Ann of Jesus had recourse to a Jesuit lay-brother, to whom she opened all her heart. Father Grou, S.J., learned the way of a perfect life from a holy Nun. In Religious Houses this manifestation is generally made to the Superior, or by Novices to their Master or Mistress. S. Benedict highly commends it in his Rule. He does not make it a strict precept, but terms it the fifth degree of humility.

For persons entering on the Religious life it is of all importance to be perfectly open with Superiors. A close Novice will never persevere. Novices often leave a Religious House without revealing the true reason of their withdrawal. The real reason is a secret between them and

the devil. They are content to allege a lesser reason and keep close the secret which the devil has confided to them. Now as nothing breaks up a friendship like the revealing of secrets, so nothing angers and alienates the devil from us so incurably as the uncovering to Superiors the evil thoughts and suggestions he has confided to us. His friendship with us is destroyed by the revealing of his secrets. To make these manifestations we may have a great repugnance. We should never yield to this, for, it may be, our very salvation depends upon it.

Those that are further advanced in the spiritual life will not generally require to make such frequent manifestations as Novices. None can safely pass it by altogether, and some to the end of their course must often have recourse to it. The reason is this. Some have naturally a more peaceable temperament and character, and have few and not violent temptations. When they have once got firmly set on a good course, they go straight forward without meeting with any difficulties. They have therefore nothing to manifest; no doubts to be solved, no trials to be helped in. Others are led by God in a very different manner. They have, perhaps during the whole of their lives, great temptations. Others again are sometimes tempted much, and sometimes have long intervals of great peace.

Because Saint Dorothee was continually besieging Saint Dosithee, and asking about, and manifesting a thousand things, it does not follow that every one else has the same call, or ought to do the same things. What is profitable for one Saint might be hurtful to another. We must never narrow the ways of God into one groove. God's ways are as various as men are various. God never repeats Himself, says Father Faber. No two men are led exactly in the same fashion. It is enough that we manifest our heart in such proportion, and at such times, as we find by experience, and by the light of God in our conscience, to be profitable to our souls. Thomas a Kempis says: "That at the recurrence of the greater festivals of the year we do well to renew our good resolutions, and to brush up afresh our armour." Such times, and that of our yearly Retreat, are fitting seasons for a review of our conduct, and for the manifesting of our heart. Although in the spring time a plant grows rapidly, we cannot actually see it grow; but when we compare its size with what it had reached a few weeks before, we are able to behold how much it has increased. So in taking a review, from time to time, of our faults and virtues, we ought to be able to see a difference, an advance perhaps here, and perhaps in some other point a slip backwards.

Subjects for review and manifestation may be

reduced to five heads. 1st. Attachments to persons and things. We naturally love some more than others, sometimes on account of their greater virtue, sometimes for their agreeable manners or personal attractiveness. We are not bound to love all equally, but we are bound to have an equal charity for all, an equal readiness to assist all in their wants, an equal readiness to associate with all when duty calls. In Communities particular friendships are to be detested, where strong marks of preference for one or other are robberies from the public charity. So says S. Bonaventure. We ought to keep ourselves quite detached from things and occupations. The Chévalier de Renty, examining one day if he were wholly detached, conceived that he would feel pain to part with a trusty sword that had served him well on many occasions. With this thought he drew it out of the scabbard, and shivered it to the hilt upon a stone. S. Ignatius, examining if he was detached from the Order he had instituted, came to the conclusion that ten minutes recollection in God would completely reconcile him to its destruction. In order to keep themselves detached, the Visitation Nuns have to change their cells, rosaries, and little pictures every year.

The second head is our *repugnances* to labour, food, silence, obedience, and the like. Particular aversions to this or that person come under this head. Some aversions are natural,

grounded on dissimilarity of character and disposition. Slow people dislike to see others do a thing in a nimble, hasty manner. Quick people hate to see a thing done in a slow, loitering fashion. Some aversions are grounded on the thought that the person has been meddling in our affairs, or has done us an injury. The disagreeable ways of others are to be borne with in charity. But it is not generally advisable to try to root out our aversion by diligent good offices or prayers. Such things, by bringing the person too prominently before the mind, are calculated to irritate rather than to allay the evil. It is best rather to show only the same sort of charity to that person which we would to any other, and no more. The aversion will thus gradually become feebler and more tolerable.

The *third* head is that of our *prayer*, our different devotions, rosaries, &c.; our mode of mental prayer, aspirations, and recollections during the day.

The *fourth* head is our *temptations*: such as cause uneasiness, or occur frequently; such as to anger, sloth, sleepiness, gluttony, impurity, dissipation, waste of time.

The *fifth* head concerns Novices in Religion, and their temptations against the state; ill health; love of home and friends; dislike of subjection, mortification, or general disgust at everything.

CHAPTER V.

The holy Rule.

BESIDES the Books of Judgment, already mentioned, there is one book more for those who have embraced the Religious life, and that is the Book of the Rule. Religious will be examined by the standard of the Rule of which they have made profession. There was a certain Cardinal of the Cistercian Order, who lived in Rome. On the morning of his death, his secretary, being on his way into Rome very early, before daybreak, met a vast procession coming thence. Among them was the Cardinal, escorted by two demons. The Cardinal, calling out to his secretary, told him he was dead, and was now being led to judgment. The secretary asked him if he knew what the sentence would be. The Cardinal replied he did not; but that Saint Peter would give an account how he had acted as Cardinal, and Saint Benedict how he had acted as a Monk. Religious are buried in some Congregations with the book of the Rule in their hand, and in others with the schedule of their Profession, to signify that they will be condemned or acquitted, according as they have observed their Rule and their vows.

The Book of the Rule never binds under pain of mortal sin, unless in points where it is expressly and clearly stated so. But *practically* its violation is always a venial sin, even when the Rule is said not to bind under sin at all, mortal or venial. The Dominican Rule does not bind under pain of sin, even venial sin; yet Saint Thomas says of it that the transgression of its rules is a *venial fault*. Saint Francis of Sales teaches the same of the Rule of the Visitation Nuns, which does not, of itself, bind under pain of sin at all. Saint Liguori therefore concludes that "to break any rule, without sufficient cause, is at least a *venial sin*." He says that this cannot be doubted. The reason is this, that a Religious is bound to tend to perfection *according to the Rule*, and unnecessary violation of Rule implies some sloth and negligence which is sinful. In the Rule are to be included all constitutions, traditions, and customs of the house, lawfully set up.

Saint Benedict constitutes his Rule as the mistress of the Monastery. He requires that all should follow its directions, the rich and the poor, priests as well as lay persons. No exception is to be claimed. Saint Bernard says that the Abbot is bound to follow the Rule just the same as any one else, for though Abbot he is still a Monk, and bound by the vows, which his lips have uttered. A Superior is not above the Rule; but a Superior's duty is to

observe the Rule, and to see that it is observed by others.

The most holy things profit not if they are not done according to the Rule. A Capuchin Lay-Brother used to pray during the time of work, instead of working: he fell sick, and our Lord, appearing to him, took from him all his prayers, and distributed them to the other Brethren. S. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi had such a love of prayer that her mistress gave her leave to pray when the rest were working, but the Saint never would use this permission, for she knew that there was more to be gained by working during the time of work than by the sublimest seraphic contemplation at that season. Our Lord once appeared to the Blessed Margaret Mary, and during the vision the bell rang for a Community exercise. She thought she might be excused on account of our Lord's presence, and stayed with Him; but He rebuked her severely for so doing. Saint Lutgard did much better. When she had some other employment to attend to, she would say with sweet familiarity, "Wait for me here, please, my dear Lord, I shall be back again to see you as soon as I have finished." Even if all the things that have to be done during the day are faithfully performed, yet if they are done in their wrong order, the same grace does not attend the doing of them, and matter of accusation is given to the devil. In the life of Saint Richard we

read that when one day he had his hair cut at the wrong time he saw the devil picking up the tufts as they fell, so as to charge him with his fault.

The way to become a Saint in a Religious House is very simple: "Keep the Rule, and the Rule will keep you." In proportion as Samson's hair grew his strength increased; so is it with those engaged in the Religious life. In proportion as they grow more perfect in the observance of their Rule their holiness increases. Samson's hair was the badge of his consecration to God, and the Rules of Religious are the badge of their consecration to our Lord. There is a hidden grace in each. There is a grace in the silence, a grace in the Divine Office, a grace in the recreation, a grace in the menial labours, a grace for each portion of food in the common refectory. Saint Bernard once converted a man by getting him to drink a cup of beer. There is a hidden grace in each of the Community exercises, whether agreeable or disagreeable. If any one, by a false mortification, leaves a thing at the table which ought to be eaten there is so much grace lost. The relaxations as well as the austerities work a beneficial effect on the soul. It is reported in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert that one of them, refusing at Easter the accustomed dainties, in the way of a little oil and fruit, merited to receive a severe rebuke from the ancients.

The most perfect way therefore is to keep to the Rule, and the good common custom, neither turning to the right nor to the left. We turn to the right by too much austerity, and to the left by too much slackness. Some of the Nuns of the Visitation under Saint Francis of Sales wanted to become Saints by rapid strides. This is all very well in the virtues. We cannot be too meek, too chaste, too patient. But for the outward observances Saint Francis told them to be content to run the same pace as the rest. In a Community nothing is more hateful than singular practices, however good. Even if they could be kept secret, which they cannot, their effect is bad, lowering, and soul destroying. The very ones that will run too fast, after a while cannot be got to keep up with the rest even by painful goading; or their zeal is flighty, too much, or too little; or their zeal is partial, all for prayer, or all for activity. In Saint Bridget's revelations we read of a slothful man, who joined a Monastery expecting to find it all prayer and no labour. It pleased God to convert him; for, finding he must work, he thought it better to labour in a Monastery for the love of God, than work for himself in the world. In the Order of Saint Francis was a famous preacher, named Ochinus, who excused himself from prayer, by Saint Austin's saying, "To labour is to pray—*laborare est orare.*" This neglect of prayer lost him his

vocation, and he died out of the Order. That time which is subtracted from prayer, and given to labour instead, is a robbery of God; a real urgent necessity can alone excuse it. Zeal for the forwarding of the work of the house, or the profit of the house, is no excuse. Our Lord thought Saint Gertrude such a perfect Nun because she had a sweet aptitude for everything. It mattered not to her whether she were in choir, or at recreation, or giving religious instruction, or doing some penance: she was at home in all, and did everything well.

Religious get a severer purgatory than persons of the world, through having to be brought to a purer holiness. The Mother Gabriel was an Ursuline Nun of most regular life. She promised her Mother Superior, when dying, that, if our Lord would allow, she would appear to her after death, and tell her what might be good for herself and the Community. The second night after her death she appeared to her in a very suffering state, and told her she was in great pain for her want of regularity in some things, and especially for keeping certain small things for her convenience without express permission. When she took leave of her she came to embrace her. And though she did not touch her cheek, yet the approach so near caused a burn on the left cheek of the Reverend Mother, with an inflamed tumour. Her sleeve touched the elbow of the

Reverend Mother and raised a scald, the size of half-a-crown. Both these burns were long in healing, and caused very much pain. In S. Gertrude's Monastery was a Brother John, who had charge of the temporals of the house. Sometimes in too much anxiety he distrusted God's providence. S. Gertrude saw him suffering his purgatory by mounting a ladder, some of whose steps were rotten, threatening to give way under his feet, and let him fall into the flames beneath. Saint Gertrude saw another Nun standing before our Lord, and trying to get near Him; but some nails caught her dress and kept her back. This she suffered, because, in her last sickness, she had taken an evil pleasure in the niceness of the food provided for her, and in the visits of certain worldly friends. Another Nun of the same Monastery Saint Gertrude saw standing as it were ashamed before our Lord, and He gave her no caresses. This was for certain negligences of which she had been guilty. After a while our Lord showed her His Human Nature to comfort her a little. Marie Lataste saw in a vision a certain Nun suffering for her stiff hard manners, for which reason she was not allowed to come near our Lord.

To a true Religious no breach of Religious decorum is trivial. There is a Religious way of walking, a Religious way of talking, a Religious way of sitting, of holding the hands and

the feet, a Religious tone of voice. In all the outward behaviour the Religiousness of the soul is manifested. The outward behaviour is but a shell, but never is there a kernel without a shell. The shell protects the kernel. As a frugal housekeeper spends every penny well, so does the true Religious look well to every little practice of a regular life. Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves. Be exact in small matters, and you will hardly be tempted to great faults. But those who despise small things shall fall by little and little.

CHAPTER VI.

The Rule as a Mould.

A RELIGIOUS Rule has a kernel as well as a shell, and this kernel is the spirit of its first founder. The spirit of the founder is expressed and breathes in the Rule itself: it is to be found in the spiritual books of the Order, and is handed down from age to age by a living tradition. In outward life all the Religious Orders have much in common, but each has its own distinct spirit in characters that cannot be mistaken. Nothing, therefore, can be more incongruous than a Jesuit spirit in a Benedictine house, a Dominican spirit in a Franciscan Convent. A Carmelite is not the same thing as a Poor Clare. Nor is even a Sister of Mercy the same thing as a Sister of Charity. Each Order, even of the modern Congregations, has its own distinctive spirit; and much more marked is this divergency in the older Orders. One sometimes sees a Renaissance altar in a Gothic church, or a Greek facade added to a Gothic building. But these medleys show an utter want of true taste, and look ridiculous; so for a Religious of one Order to have the spirit of another seems to show an utter want

of discernment as to his true place and vocation.

The particular characteristics of each Religious Order are not easily describable. Many of them are so subtle as to escape analysis. One Order is remarkable for the extreme to which it pushes the counsel of poverty; another for its high cultivation of the lustre of chastity; another for the absoluteness of obedience. The Benedictine and Jesuit Orders part essentially from each other in that idea which forms the very foundation-stone of the existence of each. The Jesuit Order represents a company of soldiers under a general. The Benedictine idea is that of a school under a teacher; or more still, that of a family of children under a charitable father. These leading ideas of the two Institutions shed a leavening influence over all the other ideas and practices in each. The position of a child in a family, and that of a soldier in an army, are utterly different. The obedience of a child to its father, and that of a soldier to his general, have a complexion of a very different hue. It is the same word, but not the same thing. The whole tone of character and type of mind resulting from the Benedictine system, is strikingly dissimilar to that which is the fruit of the Jesuit rules.

This dissimilarity is not in one or two points, but in everything. An analogous example may be taken from what we see in natural history.

In apples it will be found that the fruit of each variety has its own known peculiar shape. The skin of the fruit has its own peculiar texture. The flesh of the fruit and the pips are also peculiar to the particular variety; nay, the leaves of the tree, the bark, the mode of growth of the branches and of the roots, all tell the particular variety, and distinguish the tree from other varieties of apples. So a Religious Order stamps its character upon its children, and moulds them after the model of its founder's mind, making them to differ essentially from the members of other Institutes. It takes possession of the whole man, outer and inner; and it is not content till it has set its mark upon every jot and tittle of his character and outward comportment. It will leave nothing untouched.

As there is a natural fatherhood by which parents pass on to their children their own character and bodily form, so there is a spiritual fatherhood by which the founders of Religious Orders pass on to their children their own tone of mind, tastes, character, and pursuits. The children of these Orders have a family likeness. The features of a Dominican or Franciscan are reproduced from age to age, and perpetuated in the Order. The look of the countenance even gets the peculiar look of the Order, the inner man affecting and moulding the outer. In the natural order the family likeness, how-

ever strongly marked, does not stamp out all individuality; so in the spiritual order there is ample room left for the play of each one's natural bent and particular gifts, all still being brought into conformity with the Order and tinged with its spirit. There may be a hundred flowers on a plant, and no two of them in all points and exactly resemble each other, still all are flowers of the same species, and are like to each other.

Allowances must be made for difference of nationality. That regimental exactitude that is to be found in French houses must not be expected in English ones. The genius of the nation is to be considered, and a French Benedictine must differ more or less from an English Benedictine, as Father Lacordaire said of the Dominicans in France, he wished them to be French Dominicans, not Italian Dominicans. Each nation has characteristic excellences which must not be fully expected of others. Each nation has also its characteristic faults, which in others would be intolerable. These are the results, partly of blood and race, partly of education and climate. A foreigner, educated and reared from a child in this country, loses much of his national characteristics, but not the whole. As for difference of country, so allowance must be made for the age in which we live. A Benedictine of the nineteenth century must not be expected to be an exact

reproduction of the Benedictine of early times, or of the middle ages. Such a thing would be an unreality. We may reproduce buildings, but we cannot reproduce men. However, to bend too much to the age in which we live is a far commoner error than the bending too little. The spirit of the Rule must always be kept in force, even when the letter is, by discretion, in some little departed from. A rigid conformity to every letter of the Rule might make a splendid piece of mechanism, faultless in its movements; but this is not what is wanted. What is wanted is to see living Religious persons who, with the character of their own century, show themselves true children of their Order, faithful to its Rule, and steeped with its spirit, some little modifications being allowed to their circumstances. Servile admirers of the Middle Ages would copy things quite out of keeping with the habits of our age, not because good in themselves, but as mediæval. Thus it was that S. Jerome's admirers in Rome would be so like him that they walked with the same slouching gait.

Putting aside all accidentals of age, and climate, and country, there will still be an ample field for a true following of the Rule, so that the children's portraits will bear the family likeness of their ancestors in the Order. And in the same Order may be found persons leading very different lives, yet still truly im-

bued with the spirit of their father. Persons whose call is to a life of prayer, and persons whose call is to a life of activity, find their home in the same Order, and in the same house. Each Religious house is like Bethany of old, containing the two sisters, Martha and Mary, the first for the life of activity, the second for the life of prayer. In houses of active charity God plants certain souls given to prayer, that they may act as a drag upon the too active, and by their example incite them to that prayer which they would otherwise neglect. God also introduces into contemplative houses certain persons of an active habit, who may undertake the management of the affairs of the house, which would fall to ruin if all were wholly given to prayer. God so tempers vocations for the benefit of all, leaving some to follow the side of activity, others the side of prayer, sitting at the feet of our Lord.

All the excellences of Religious Orders are the excellences of Jesus Christ. In one Order shines His great poverty, in another His chastity, in another His obedience, in another His mild charity, in another works of mercy, in another His contemplation. The various Mysteries of the Gospel dispensation are made the secret spirit of other Orders, such as the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Sacrament, &c. Now these excellences of Jesus Christ, and these Mysteries, are the common possession of all the

faithful. Religious only have them in an eminent degree. The faithful, therefore, feel attracted to this or that Religious Order, according to the spirit by which they themselves are drawn to Christ. Some have not themselves the spirit of perfection, yet they love and admire it in others, being glad to see their Lord faithfully imitated, served, and adored. Others there are in the world against their will, bound by ties which they would fain see loose, who are not permitted, through want of health, strength, or temporal means, to follow out their desires of perfection in a life separate altogether from the world. These bind themselves, either as Tertiaries or in some other way, to the Religious Order of their predilection; and as far as their circumstances will permit, they follow out in the world a life of perfection, so as to become, in a broader sense, partakers of the merits of the Religious life, and true children of the Order.

S. Jane Frances de Chantal says "that the best bread for Religious is their own bread." By this is meant that no spiritual instructions are so good for us as those coming from persons of our own Order. Mother's milk is best. A nurse's milk, however rich or delicate, does not profit the child as much. The truer we are to the spirit of our own Order, the higher will be the measure of our perfection and sanctity.

CHAPTER VII.

Poverty and Chastity.

ONE of the principal Christian virtues is poverty. Our Lord makes it the first of the beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit. The virtue and vow of poverty differ much from each other. By the vow all propriety is cut off. One who makes a vow of poverty cannot give or take, cannot borrow or lend, cannot buy, sell, or exchange. No man may either give, lend, sell, or exchange what is not his. And one who has made a vow of poverty cannot take anything to be his, nor buy, nor even borrow for a time. Persons under a vow of poverty, that are living in the world, are dispensed from the strictness of these obligations, and to them is applied that saying of our Lord: "Now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a scrip." Our Lord gives a dispensation to act according to circumstances.

The *first* degree of the virtue of poverty is to hate all superfluities, all luxury, pomp, and splendour; all rich dishes, soft and fine clothing, expensive pictures and costly furniture; in short, every refinement of wealth. The *second* degree is to be content with poor unpalatable

food, with inconvenient lodging, and plain coarse clothing; to suffer discomfort sometimes with a ready will; not to be troubled or anxious about this world's goods, but to trust generally to Providence. The *third* degree of poverty, as a virtue, is to suffer gladly the want of the necessaries of life, to have insufficient clothing, and not enough food, or such as is very distasteful; to be ill-cared for in sickness, and not to have the remedies necessary for health. To be quite content in such circumstances is a sign of having reached the *third* degree. Such was the contentment of S. Aloysius, who, when sick, was lodged in a chamber under the stairs, where the continual tramp of feet up and down made any quiet rest quite impossible.

S. Francis, travelling towards a certain Monastery of his Order, said to his companion on the road: "Suppose when we arrive after nightfall the porter does not know us, and refuses to believe our story. Suppose he will not take us in for the night, but drives us away with a stick, as deceivers, and so we have to pass the night in the open air. Then that will be 'perfect joy.'" On another occasion, S. Francis, after begging some crusts in a village, came with his companion to a little brook outside the village, where, sitting down under a tree, he placed the mouldy morsels on the slab of a rock. Then in a rapture of joy he said to

the Brother: "Oh! how good God is. Is not God good, Brother?" The Brother knew not what to make of it, or what could be the cause of this transport of joy. Then S. Francis explained. "See, is not God good? Here we have the shade of this tree, and this beautiful clear running water; and God has given us a nice table in this rock for our food. What more could we wish for? Is not God most bountiful?"

The Curé of Ars had a great love of poverty. He used sometimes to take a fresh loaf of bread, and going outside the village, he waited at the corner of a lane till some beggar came out also. Then he would ask to examine his scrip, and would exchange his fresh loaf for the dry crusts of the beggar's wallet, returning home with his store. There were two ladies who often asked the Curé to invite them to supper with him. Wearied with their importunities, he one day granted their request. When they were come he set down on a bare table a jug of water, and by its side a basket of the "bread of the poor," as he termed it. He then explained to the ladies how he had become possessed of these dry, mouldy crusts, the contents of a beggar's scrip. These pious ladies had not reached the third degree of the virtue of poverty. Their appetite was completely taken away, and they never again asked to be invited to eat with the Curé.

Our Lord showed a pattern of this virtue in the crib; and when on the cross He had not even a drop of water to quench His thirst. Perfect poverty is stripped of kith and kin, and of friends, is indifferent to health, to talents, to particular devotions; in fine, hangs only on God.

Chastity comes next to Poverty. It clothes it with whitest enamel. It is the coping stone to which poverty culminates. Chastity was worshipful even to heathen minds. The Muses were chaste virgins. So were Diana, Minerva, the Hours, the Nymphs, Themis, Justice. The temples of Bacchus, Ceres, Apollo, were served by virgins. Vesta had a number of consecrated virgins. High examples are given us by heathens of the esteem of chastity. Ten young girls were sent by the senate of Rome to the palace of a prince. Whilst the vessel that conveyed them was on the Tiber, Clelia, one of them, told the rest that in a palace their chastity would be in danger. By her counsel they all leapt overboard in the middle of the night, and contriving to swim to land, they consecrated themselves for safety, as virgins, in the temple of Vesta. Virginia was a Roman maiden, the daughter of a centurion. She was seized by the servants of one of the Council of Ten, who then ruled Rome. As she was being carried off her father ran to her, and said: "Which do you value most, my child, your chastity or your life?" "My chastity," she

cried. Her father then drew a dagger and plunged it into her heart.

The annals of Christianity are full of the brightest instances of the love of chastity. It is impossible to recount them all. For chastity Saint Agnes was beheaded. S. Agatha had her breast cut off. S. Pelagia was torn in pieces. S. Potamiana was put to death in a caldron of boiling pitch. S. Ebba of Whitby, with her Nuns, fearing for their chastity in the Danish invasion, cut off their noses and their lips, so that when the Danes came and saw them, they burnt them all alive in their Monastery. To combat temptations against chastity, S. Macarius walked with bare feet upon thorns. S. Bernard plunged himself till half frozen in an icy pond. A solitary of Egypt got up one night, and raking the embers together, burnt the flesh of his arm to the bone.

The *first* degree of chastity is to refuse courageously all settled consent to any bad act, impure movement, or unclean thought or image. The *second* degree is to shun with care dangerous thoughts and occasions, not to trifle with them. If our garments get too near the fire they will be scorched, if not burnt into a hole. A spark may leap out of the furnace and set us in a flame. A moth flying round the candle does not intend to destroy itself, but its venturesomeness often has this unhappy result. The *third* degree is to avoid all that may tarnish

the lustre of chastity. Chastity has a bloom like that of a butterfly, which will not bear handling, but is gone with a touch. Take a water-lily out of the cool water into a hot hand, and in two or three minutes its white petals are withered, and its perfume is gone. Gardeners, when they put peaches into a basket, are careful to separate them from each other by a leaf, lest their touching each other should cause the tender skin to break. So those who would reach the third degree of chastity must clean out from their hearts all soft affections, both for persons of their own and of the opposite sex, all inordinate social love of anyone's company or intercourse,—that craving for a person's presence that sets the heart in a tingle at the sound of the person's voice or step, or the very rustle of their clothing. They must be the more careful if sometimes bad thoughts are suggested though not consented to. This smoke tells of a fire underneath. Great purity must be studied, even in necessary occasions of showing benevolence or tender care to children or others, in the nursing of the sick, &c.

The highest degree is reached when seldom and feebly any evil thoughts or motions are experienced, and when such things only create disgust. "Chastity," says Ruysbroek, "is the escape of the creature from the creature into the arms of the Creator." The lily of chastity has six petals. The *first* is *humility*. God humbles

the proud by permitting them to fall into shameful sins. The *second* is *obedience*. Be obedient and the flesh will then be subject to the spirit. The *third* is *mortification*. Retrench luxuries, which nurse the naughtiness of the body. Refuse to the sight, hearing, smell, &c., the pleasures of worldly scents, music, and spectacles which soften and enfeeble the spiritual warrior. The *fourth* petal is *guard of the heart*. Thieves, to rob a house, slip a little boy in at a very tiny opening, and he unbars the doors and lets in all the band. By *guard of the heart* the smallest occasions of sin are detected and kept off. The *fifth* petal is *mental study* and occupation. Activity of the mind minishes that of the body. To combat evil temptations S. Jerome studied Hebrew. The *sixth* petal is *prayer*. Lift the soul into God, that lost in Him she may cease to care for bodily delights. These six petals are all clean, and dazzlingly white. They guard the central sanctuary of the lily, from which is breathed forth the most sweet and pure odour of chastity.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Christian Virtue of Obedience.

SAINT Francis Xavier used to say that he prayed as if all his success depended on God, and he laboured as if all depended on himself. Prayer by itself is not enough. Prayer alone does not sanctify. There must be virtue also. Virtue is the result of effort coupled with grace; but effort there must be. God only helps those who help themselves. Natural virtue is good; Christian virtue is better; but Religious virtue is highest of all.

Of the practical virtues obedience is the most excellent. Its want betrays the want of other virtues; its possession argues the possession of the other virtues. Adam sinned many ways, but all is summed up in the one sin of disobedience. Our Lord was full of every virtue, but the one singled out as revealing the rest is His obedience. His obedience was stretched to the uttermost. He became obedient unto *death*, even the death of the *cross*. He was full, therefore, of all perfection. By the road of disobedience man fell from God; by the road of obedience he returns back to God. In some Religious Orders they do not make three vows,

but only this one vow of obedience, because the others are supposed to be comprised in it.

For obedience to be a Christian virtue it must be paid to God, not man. Obedience is to be given to princes, says Saint Paul, "not for wrath, but for *conscience* sake;" because these higher powers are ordained by God, and he that resisteth resisteth the ordinance of God. Servants are told to obey their masters, doing their service "as to the Lord, not as to men." In the same manner Religious persons obey, not men, but God. For when a Superior gives a commandment to the outward ear, God at the same time gives the commandment in the court of the conscience. The Religious obeys, as pleasing God, not as pleasing men. If obedience is given to obtain the personal favour of the Superior, or to escape inconvenience, it is not Christian obedience. Even a horse will put itself to its utmost speed to please its master, or to escape the lash; but Christian virtue has regard, not to a person seen, but to that unseen Lord who rules in the secret of the conscience.

1. The virtue of obedience may be regarded from various standpoints, and, viewed from each, has various degrees. First, then, with regard to the person obeyed for God's sake, the *lowest* degree is to obey lawful Superiors, or those above us; the *second*, to obey our equals; the *third*, to obey those below us.

In the *first* degree it is more perfect to obey those who have not the chief authority than to obey the one who is head over all, from whom the rest draw their authority. To say, "I will obey the first Superior, but no one else," shows a very poor spirit of obedience. Saint Benedict, in his Rule, says that the Brethren are not only to obey Superiors, but mutually to obey one another. This *second* degree of obedience is an *obliging* disposition, and a willingness to render a service to our equals, at the cost of some inconvenience to ourselves. The *third* degree is a *condescendence* to the wishes of those under our command, or who hold a lower position than ourselves. This beautiful spirit is shown by Superiors, who, according to the injunction of Saint Benedict's Rule, adapt themselves to the humours of those whom they might command, so as to make the yoke sit easy and sweet upon them. Our Lord said to His disciples: "I am among you as He that ministereth." His proper position was one of command, but His action was rather of one serving others.

2. A second point of view in the virtue of obedience is the *thing* commanded. Here the *first* degree of obedience is to obey in a thing agreeable to us, that accords with our own inclination. Even agreeable things become irksome sometimes, because commanded. So corrupt is our nature that we hate to be com-

manded at all. The *second* degree is the doing, by command, things neither pleasing nor unpleasing, but which we should not otherwise have done. The *third* degree is to do things against the grain, things to which we have a repugnance. The *fourth* degree is to love and court subjection. When Brother Giles, the Franciscan, was told he might choose his own place of residence in any house of the Order he pleased, he came to his Superior after three days, to beg him to take away this liberty, for the very thought of it made him quite wretched. Saint Pachomius, once when working at basket making, was interrupted by a boy, who said, "Father, you are not making them right." Saint Pachomius went and sat by the boy, and asked him to show him a better plan. The boy appointed him a different method, not so good, but Saint Pachomius followed it, thinking it a great gain to practise a sublime obedience at so small a cost.

3. In matter of *time*, to obey on one single occasion is the *first* degree. The *second* is to obey for some considerable fixed time. Obedience till death is the *third* degree. Many who reach the first degree will not venture on the second; and many who can endure the second cannot manage the third. It is obedience till death that scares some people from the Religious life, who would have courage to obey for a limited period.

4. In the *extent* of obedience, it is one degree to obey in a single matter; a higher to obey in many matters; and the highest to obey in all matters without exception. Even Religious obedience of the *vow* is restricted to matters that are *according to the Rule*; but the *virtue* of obedience goes beyond the *vow*, and is more perfect.

5. Superiors signify their will in various *modes* and *measures*. Then the *first* degree of obedience is to obey their express commands; the *second* to yield to their counsels; the *third* to comply with their known desires.

6. It is the will in man which gives obedience, but there are various measures. The *first* degree is a bare consent to perform the thing enjoined, the will within rebelling against it. When a command is fulfilled, not for God's sake, but for some private end, or to escape inconvenience, the obedience is not a Christian virtue. The *second* degree is when the will complies for God's sake, but gives free scope to the intellect to condemn the thing enjoined, as ill-judged, indiscreet, &c. When the understanding is forbidden by the will to canvass the wisdom, or discreteness, etc., of a command, then this is called blind obedience. It is never requisite to justify the command of a Superior by conjuring up plausible reasons for it. Indeed, to do so is a want of simplicity. It is sufficient not to judge at all, but to obey. To

judge is the office of the Superior, to obey is the part of the subject. Besides, Superiors are not infallible, and sometimes give foolish and indiscreet commands. Then a subject, if called on to form an opinion, would have to say, "I think the command unwise." To insist upon a contrary opinion, in order to justify the Superior, would be against truthfulness. If we seem to see clearly that a command is unwise, and we think the Superior might see it too, if we represented it, we are then bound in simplicity to make known our lights, so as to give the Superior every help to act with discretion. If our views are not adopted, we must cease to reason further, and blindly obey. The Superior is responsible, not we. If we have culpably withheld our lights, we are to blame for any ensuing mischief. This *third* degree is to obey gladly, with full consent of the will.

7. In *promptitude*, to obey after a very lengthy delay is the *first* degree. To obey after some inconsiderable delay, is the *second* degree. To obey at once is the *third* degree. This ready obedience is called by Saint Benedict the first grade of humility. When performed gracefully, with sweetness and ease, it is the token of a high perfection.

8. As regards the amount of *subjection* given, the *first* degree of obedience is willingness to forbear actions done *beside* obedi-

ence; neither authorized nor forbidden. Such an action did our Lord, when He stayed behind in Jerusalem, as a Child, His parents not knowing of it. But when it was signified to Him that He should come with them, although He had said He ought to be about His Father's business, He at once went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject to them. There must always therefore be the willingness to give up the action, if it be forbidden. The *second* degree is to do actions by permission. To do a thing by permission is not the same as to do a thing by obedience. If a thing is done *beside* obedience, the *whole* responsibility rests with the doer. If it be done by permission the responsibility is *divided*. Part rests on the person asking the permission, and part on the person giving the permission. If the permission be *extorted*, that is, allowed sorrowfully by the Superior, for fear of worse evils, far the greater part of the responsibility rests with the person asking the permission. If a thing is done under a strict command, the *whole* responsibility rests with the person commanding. To do a thing by command is the *third* degree of obedience.

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CHAPTER IX.

Modesty, Meekness, Humility, Patience,
Justice, Truth.

THE virtue of modesty is the bridesmaid and guardian of chastity. No more beautiful ornament can be possessed than the virtue of modesty. Oh! with what lovely grace it adorns the whole person. It shines like a seemly pearl in the life and features of the young, true messenger of happy promise, and token of a character simple, and of real excellence. It lifts its head up like a rod of discipline to stop all dishonouring sentiments, and every movement too light of a slippery age. It puts to a speedy flight all shameless or unbecoming words. Modesty is the sister of chastity, the manifested sign of dove-like simplicity, the companion of innocence, the ever-shining lamp of a pure soul.

The *first* degree of modesty is to be abashed when put to a task, the proper execution of which we are uncertain of being able to accomplish. The *second* degree is to feel all confused at being praised after having done a thing well. The *third* degree is, after having done a thing excellently well, to be beautifully unconscious

of its being worthy of praise, and to wonder without awkwardness at the admiration excited, believing that others could have done it better, or equally well.

MEEKNESS. The *first* degree of the virtue of meekness is to give no outward token of anger, by sign, by word, or by action. The *second* degree is to hold one's spirit in sweet peace within when thwarted; as the dove allows her young to be taken from her in perfect calm. The *third* degree is to rejoice at tribulations, and to find in crosses a sweet hidden manna.

HUMILITY. The *first* degree of humility is to have a low opinion of self. This we may truly have, yet not like others to know our baseness, our faults, our littleness. The *second* degree is to be quite content when others slight us, and think disparagingly of us. The *third* degree is to have a thirst for dishonours and contempts, for low and menial employment, choosing it by preference, if equally for God's honour.

PATIENCE. The *first* degree of patience is to bear equably the ordinary ills of life, loss of friends, loss of employment naturally liked, loss of honour, &c. The *second* degree is to bear patiently severe sickness, unmerited chastisement, mutilation of the members, loss of our eyes or the like, through carelessness or malice, loss of life through being neglected. The *third* degree is to let no sign or word escape us of complaint in trying ills, not to

shun them, to be quite unruffled, and in good peace, and to wish for more.

JUSTICE. The *first* degree of justice is to pay our debts wholly, large and small. The *second* degree is so to respect justice as to pay more than is due, if any one fancies it to be due. If one take our coat to let him have our cloak too. The *third* degree is to be just where there is no absolute claim made on us; to recompense all that have done anything for us, in one way or in another. To be very careful to apply alms for the exact intention of the giver, to remember benefactors in our prayers, &c.

TRUTH. The *first* degree of truthfulness is never to tell a falsehood, even in the smallest matters. The *second* degree is never to equivocate or dissemble, or do things seemingly for one motive when really done for another. For instance, if we pay any one a visit for recreation or for curiosity, not to pretend to do it as an act of charity, not to gratify sensuality under the cloak of due care for our health. The *third* degree is to be simple and straightforward in all our ways. It is not untruthful to show charity where we have no natural liking.

FORTITUDE. The *first* degree of fortitude is to resist sinful pleasure when strongly impelled to it; when sin looks very inviting and entices. This degree enables the soul to break away from bad companions; to give up evil habits of long standing; to make a good confession of bad

sins. The *second* degree of fortitude enables the soul to persevere in a pious life, notwithstanding the sneers of worldly friends; it pushes delicate persons into the cloister; it renders them deaf to natural fears, human respect, &c.; it sets them above their feebleness, pushing them to perfection through every obstacle, and battling with energy for God. The *third* degree laughs at all torments, and with indomitable unflinching courage witnesses to truth. No dangers terrify it. It is this degree that makes Confessors of the faith, and Martyrs.

MORTIFICATION OF THE APPETITE. The *first* degree is to be unruffled when we cannot get what we would like to eat or drink. The *second* degree is to deprive ourselves of what we like, when we could get it, so as to exercise virtue or give good example. Such was the mortification of Gideon's three hundred men, who drank when thirsty, only in measure, and not to the full. Such was that of David, who poured out the water on the ground which his men had procured for him at the risk of their lives, and would not drink it. Jacoponi, having indulged a desire for a piece of bacon, got a bit and kept it in his cell till it stunk intolerably. Then he forced himself to eat it, saying: "You thought you would like the taste of this bacon, now you have got what you longed for." The *third* degree is reached when the taste is

so deadened as hardly to discern what it takes. So it was with S. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi. S. Bernard drank oil once instead of water, without perceiving his mistake.

CONTRITION. The *first* degree of the grace of contrition is to sorrow for our mortal sins. The second is to sorrow for venial sins. The third is to sorrow for involuntary imperfections, whereby our service is so worthless in the eyes of our Lord. Again, the *first* degree is to sorrow for those sins which have become known to others. The *second* to sorrow for those we ourselves only know. The *third* is to sorrow for our secret sins, which God only knows, our sins of ignorance. Again, the *first* degree of contrition is to sorrow for the sins we have led others into wilfully. The *second* degree is to sorrow for those we have allowed by our consent. The *third* degree is to sorrow for the sins we have occasioned in others by indiscretion or want of carefulness. Again, the *first* degree of contrition is to sorrow for those sins we committed wilfully against the light of grace. The *second* degree is to sorrow for the sins we fell into from surprise or blindness. The *third* degree is to sorrow for the sins we should certainly have committed but for want of opportunity, or want of knowledge, when our will was ripe for sin, but God's mercy withheld the occasion. The *first* degree of contrition obtains the pardon of our sins, so that the punishment

of hell is cancelled. The *second* degree cancels the temporal punishment. The *third* degree causes the soul to rise higher by reason of the thought of the sin than she would have done without it. Thus, says S. Austin, God uses sin as a stepping stone to heaven. For, by the workings of grace and penance, God wonderfully turns the tricks of the devil against himself—by a divine alchemy transmuting the injuries inflicted on the soul into benefits. Nothing comes amiss with God. Out of the most unlikely materials He makes capital for His kingdom of glory, so that the grateful soul is lost in admiration at His power, and at the magnificent liberality of His grace.

In Saint Gertrude's Revelations there are many passages which teach that God permits faults in His elect for their greater good, that they reap more good by the humiliation and penance than harm by the fault. God does not put really a premium on sin, or make it lawful that grace may abound, but His mercy is exceedingly liberal, more than cancelling our faults when we thoroughly repent. Our Lord explained this to Saint Gertrude by various similitudes, *e.g.* :

i. If a person has a slight stain on his hands, and washes them to remove it, he not only washes the stain away, but his hands are in other respects far cleaner than before.

ii. If a person makes a rent in a garment,

and afterwards adorns it with gold lace, the rent is no longer a disfigurement, but gives additional beauty.

iii. As Gertrude prayed for a person who ardently desired to have the merit of virginity before God, but who feared to have tarnished its brightness by some human weakness, she appeared in the arms of the Lord, clothed modestly in a snow-white robe, and He gave this instruction: "When virginity receives some slight stain through human weakness, and this becomes an occasion of exercising true and solid penance, I cause these stains to appear as ornaments on the soul, and they adorn it as folds adorn a robe."

COMPUNCTION.—Compunction is a grace allied to contrition, but it has more sweetness of love in it. The *first* degree is to feel pain at sin as offensive to God, as the ruin of souls, to be willing to die rather than see innocent persons led into crime. The *second* degree is to be grieved at beholding venial sins committed carelessly. The *third* degree is to grieve at the little fruit resulting from the Passion, even in the good; the feebleness of our virtue; the fewness of persons really devoted to our Lord.

CONVERSION.—The *first* degree of conversion is to get clear of mortal sin. The *second* degree is to lessen more and more the strength of evil passions and bad habits, and to commit fewer and fewer venial sins. The *third* degree is to

rid ourselves of natural defects of character, the fruit of original sin, or of the sins of our forefathers, and to rise to virtues that are contrary to our natural temperament and disposition. In managing our conversion we ought to cultivate with great care those virtues for which there is a natural aptitude in the character; just as in ordinary matters one who is musical cultivates music, rather than painting or mathematics, for which he has no talent. Our natural aptitude for one or other virtue is God's call to us to try to attain in it a high degree of excellence.

CHAPTER X.

Other Christian Virtues.

PENANCE. The *first* degree of penance is to do *worthy* penance for our own sins. It is one thing to do penance, and another thing to do *worthy* penance. By worthy penance our sins are completely cancelled, like those of the good thief, both as to the eternal and temporal punishment. The whole of the guilt is remitted. The *second* degree of penance is to do works of satisfaction for our friends and benefactors, our relations, and any who may have a claim on our compassion. The *third* degree is to do penance for the conversion of sinners generally, or the souls in purgatory. The Curé of Ars, being kept awake, by the devil making a noise in the room, said aloud: "I willingly offer this sleeplessness for the conversion of sinners." In a moment the noise ceased. For the *costliness* of the satisfactions, the *first* degree is to give alms of our goods. The *second* is to offer, at the expense of the body, fasts, disciplines, pilgrimages, &c. The *third* degree is reached when God inflicts severe bodily sickness, or strange inward pains of mind, which the soul wilfully bears as satisfaction for the sins of others.

LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR. The *first* degree of love is to love those who love us, who help us, or render us a service. This love is shown by returning benefits, by sacrificing something for their sake, putting ourselves to trouble or inconvenience on their account. This love is not a Christian virtue: it is natural. The heathen have it. Our Lord says: "If ye love them that love you, what thanks to you: for sinners love those that love them." Love begets love. To be without love towards those who love us is to be guilty of blackest ingratitude. Yet alas! Christians fall short sometimes, and do not repay the benefits they receive. Josephus tells us of Herod Agrippa that, when he was on his road to prison, being sent thither by Tiberius for wishing that Caius was Emperor, a slave, Thaumastus, gave him a drink of water. Agrippa said to him: "I will repay you one day for this kindness." He was as good as his word. When Caius was made Emperor, Agrippa was made King of Judea. He obtained the freedom of Thaumastus, and made him a chief officer in his own household; and before he died he took orders that Thaumastus should be continued in his office under his son. This wicked man therefore was not without so much virtue.

The *second* degree of love is to love those who do not love us; doing benefits, and spending ourselves in sacrifice for those who never

can repay us, hoping for nothing in return. This is a truly Christian virtue. Our Lord makes every man to be our neighbour. All men have been created by God to His own image. All have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and so ought to be dear to us. This is not, however, the highest degree of love. The *third* degree of love is to love those that hate us, those who are our born enemies, who have wronged us deeply, who thwart and injure us, who have led us into sin. To reach the third degree we must forgive them fully, be ready to go out of our way to serve them, grieve for their misfortunes, and so act with them as almost to force them to love us.

COMPASSION. The *first* degree of compassion is to pity those that are in great affliction, to deprive ourselves of our own ease and comfort, in order to come to their assistance. The *second* degree is to have an eye always to the ordinary wants of others in comforts. Our Lord not only relieved the great distresses of others, but was careful of their lesser wants. For this He took His disciples aside into a desert place, that they might *rest awhile*; and, when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, He commanded them to give her *something to eat*. Our Lord rebuked Simon for not having given Him water for His feet; and He promises an eternal recompense for a cup of water given in the name of a disciple. The

third degree of compassion is to be unable to bear the sight of any one's pain or discomfort, even that of the lower animals,—never to kill a fly, or a worm, or a spider, when they can be removed without difficulty; to be merciful to cattle, seeing that they have a sufficiency of food and drink, and are not over-toiled. It is not against this virtue to kill noxious insects, serpents, &c., which may cause serious injury, or discomfort.

It would be too long to go through the whole series of Christian virtues. They all have their degrees, and the ascent must be made from the lower to the higher. In warring against our defects we ought to begin by ridding ourselves of those that are disagreeable to others. Having done this we should proceed to perfect ourselves in those virtues for which we have a natural aptitude. It is in the matter of virtue the same as it is in an earthly school. One has a talent for painting, another for music, another for mechanical science, &c. A pupil who had a talent for painting would act very foolishly if he neglected this matter, and spent all his time in attempting to learn music, for which he had no attraction and no ear. With all his efforts he would not make much proficiency in music; and by his neglect of painting he would fall short even in that in which he might have excelled. So in the school of virtue, one has a capacity for bodily austerities, another for

tending the sick, another for prayer, another for teaching the ignorant. Each one ought to cultivate to the best the particular grace with which he has been favoured. It is his speciality, the thing in which he can excel. If he just pass muster in some other matters he must be content.

Now there are to be found persons who take the exact opposite course. They neglect the virtues for which they have a natural gift, and strive with painful effort to reach those for which they have no aptitude. This they do on the mistaken idea that we ought always to go counter to our natural inclinations. The very reverse is the real state of the case. God's calls in grace are ordinarily in keeping with the natural bent. In rare exceptions only does He call persons to that for which they have a great natural repugnance. His work is rather to perfect nature than to supplant it. Natural gifts must be supernaturalised, perfected, and raised into a higher sphere.

A person of simple habits, and of energetic character, is generally called to austerities: one of a benevolent disposition to works of charity. A person of a retiring nature is called ordinarily to seclusion, not to the works of an active life. The call of some is to a life of prayer, of others to mortification, of others to simple obedience, of others to an angelic chastity. One who is called to prayer may be far

behind others 'in benevolence. Benevolence is not his call. Nor need he be troubled, if only on unavoidable occasions he does his duty on this point. Another, who is excellent in benevolence and charity, comes far behind others in a spirit of prayer. Prayer is not his call. God divides His gifts as He will. Some have several, others but one or two. Each one, without envy, should try to make the most of his own particular talents, that they may bear fruit, giving glory to God and edification to men.

A colonist who takes a farm cultivates first that part of it which will be most productive, where the soil is richest, and his labour will be best recompensed. Where the ground is poorer he does not look for such fruitful results, yet he bestows some labour on it that it may not be altogether barren. So in spiritual culture, nothing must be altogether neglected, or allowed to run wild; but our efforts should be applied with wisdom,—where we may expect to reap the greatest profit.

CHAPTER XI.

The Tongue.

WHAT is more difficult than the government of the tongue? Saint James, who may be called the Apostle of Silence, says that the tongue no man can tame. He says that it is set on fire by hell, an unquiet unruly evil. Even wild beasts and serpents can be tamed by men, but the unfortunate tongue not. S. James is not the only Scripture writer that so speaks of the tongue. Solomon's proverbs are full of warnings about the tongue. The wise man, he says, is known by the fewness of his words. A man full of words shall not prosper upon the earth. In the multitude of words sin is not wanting. Saint James says that a man who does not offend in word is a perfect man. David says that sometimes he kept silence even from good words, so afraid was he of the unfortunate tongue. For when we intend only to speak what is good, yet, through the corruption of the heart, that which is bad slips out likewise. It is easier to be silent altogether, than to speak neither too much nor too little.

The management of the tongue is of im-

mense importance. We shall go to heaven or to hell, according to the good or evil use of the tongue. Actions will not be required; a bad word will turn the scale, and send us to hell. "By thy words," says our Lord, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It is for this reason that in all Religious Orders there are certain times of absolute silence, that the tongue, being kept in check, may be more under guidance when it is allowed to speak. Silence, too, helps much to intensify the powers of the soul, which, by speaking, are dissipated, just as certain liqueurs lose their strength if they are left uncorked.

The business, also, of the Religious life is of such moment that it must not be interrupted by unnecessary speech. Our Lord told the seventy, when He sent them on their mission, to salute no man by the way. Eliseus, when he sent his servant with his staff to lay it on the face of the dead child of the Sunamitess, not only told him to salute no man, but if any saluted him he was to give no answer. However, as Solomon says: "There is a time to be silent, and there is a time to speak." It is quite possible to be over-silent. Silence sometimes comes from a sullen, close, and morose disposition. The soul becomes concentrated in self, and cares for no one else; has no charity. Of the Spouse it is said: "Under her

tongue are honey and milk." It is with the tongue that we lash an offender, but the honey and milk heal and soften the wound. By the honey is meant the divine intention of our speech, which has been uttered for God. When an offender is reproved from a holy motive he more willingly forgives the speaker the pain caused. The honey sweetens the bitterness of the cup. By milk is signified human kindness. We can receive a rebuke from one that is affectionate, which we would not at all take from another. The first rule for our speech is then that it should be with charity; never to wound the feelings of another, unless by absolute duty. Our Lord called the pharisees hypocrites, whited sepulchres, because He was obliged, in defence of the ignorant, who were misled by them. But to take a pleasure in hurting the feelings of another by jests and sarcasm is wholly diabolical.

The second rule our Lord gives us: "Let your speech be mingled with salt." Salt is that which preserves from corruption. We should speak of something good, something edifying. Blessed Jordan, the Dominican, used to say, that, as voices in a choir, after singing some time, get lower in pitch, and the tone has to be raised again; so is it at recreation, we naturally tend downwards, the pitch must be raised by the introducing of something holy, something good.

The third rule is not to be too eager. There are some people that would engross all the conversation. They have no self-command. They are like barrels full of new wine, ever ready to burst, the froth pressing out, their tongue itching to speak. It is a rule of politeness never to speak, till one who is already speaking has finished. How hateful is the company of those whose tongues are so voluble that it is impossible to get a word in.

A fourth rule is not to speak too loud. Empty barrels, it is said, make the most noise : so empty heads have the loudest voices. Their tongues are like a bell-clapper, always going, so as to be heard all over the house.

The fifth rule is not to domineer. There are some people who are filled with the spirit of contradiction, and who consider that they ought to prevail. They will have the last word. Now when one meets such characters what is one to do? If a goat came to butt at you, what would you do? Get out of the way as well as you were able. Turn the conversation. Nothing so resists a cannon ball as something soft, a dead bank of loose earth. So, if to the hot disputant we oppose a dead bank of silence or patience, he gets tired of firing his shots where he finds no resistance. A cur barks at you so long as you take notice of it. If you pay no heed to it, it soon goes off in disappointment.

The sixth rule is to weigh well before speaking. Look before you leap. Least said soonest mended. How many friendships a hasty word has irretrievably broken up. Two friends become like two hills side by side, which once were one. They will never be one again; a chasm parts them. A brawling brook now runs between. Plutarch well remarks that an injury is easier forgiven than one bitter word. This word cannot be recalled. It has left a sting which rankles ever in the memory and cannot be drawn out. It is this prudence in speaking that David prays for, when he says: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips." "A door," says S. Augustine, "is sometimes opened, sometimes kept shut. The mouth is not to be walled up, not to be silent altogether; but its words are to be watched."

But no one can safely speak who is not willing at times to be wholly silent. The keeping entire silence gives control over the tongue, even when speaking. David says: "I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle;" that is, under control. Religious ought therefore to be very exact in keeping the prescribed silences, both as to place and time. It may seem a little thing to say a few words at forbidden times, or in forbidden places, but it shows the bridle is not on the mouth; the door of it is open when

it should be shut. An undisciplined mouth shows an undisciplined heart.

Worldly talk is, however, the most ruinous to the soul. God revealed to S. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi that she always stained her soul in the parlour. By some worldly talk in the parlour, S. Gertrude lost for ten days the particular presence of our Lord. When S. Bernard was a Novice some friends came to see him, and told him a quantity of worldly news. The interest he took in it destroyed his recollection, and robbed him of his spirit of prayer. He prostrated himself with much sorrow before the altar, confessing his sin, and the light of God again visited his heart.

Once in the week, or at least once in the month, it is good to set apart a day of silence, on which, as far as our employments will allow, we may keep our tongue quiet, and give it a rest. This can be done by persons in the world, as well as by those in the Cloister. It is in silence and solitude that God's voice is heard speaking to the heart.

The silence of the night ought to be observed with especial strictness. Even nature herself teaches us this silence. The busy hum of insect life, the bee and the grasshopper, as well as the songs of warbling birds, are then hushed and still. The voices heard in the night are mostly of ill omen ; the hooting of the screech owl, or the lions roaring after their prey. Even

the sick should be careful to speak little, through respect for the silence of the night.

If we so govern our tongue, and keep it in good discipline, then the tongue will lose its naughty nature, and become what the Psalmist terms it, "my glory." It is our glory in our articulate speech, setting us up eminently above all the animal creation. It is our glory, as that by which, for all His creatures, we praise our God. It is our glory, for its power to lift up and comfort our fellow men; according to the word of the prophet: "The Lord hath given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary." The wise man also says: "A good word is better than a gift."

Touch my mouth, O Lord, with a live coal from the altar of Thy love, that being filled inwardly with its sweetness, my lips may become like a dropping honeycomb.

CHAPTER XII.

Discretion.

DISCRETION is called by S. Benedict the mother of virtues. "Without discretion," says S. Bernard, "virtue is vice." How precious, then, is this grace of discretion. Those who have it not in themselves should, as the best make-shift, place themselves wholly in the hands of a discreet guide. But as this will but very feebly supply its want, they should also earnestly cultivate this prudential virtue, and beg it supplicatingly of God. Discretion has to do with every virtue, and with every portion of a holy life.

Discretion is the guide to the true interpretation of the maxims of spiritual books, the letter of which sometimes killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Our Lord in the Gospel says that if any one strike us on the one cheek we are to turn to him the other, and that we are not to resist evil. Yet when He Himself was so struck, far from turning the other cheek, He remonstrated against the evil inflicted. Our Lord says, "Swear not at all." Yet we find S. Paul, His perfect disciple, in various places in his Epistles, swearing to the truth of what

he says, in words such as these: "Behold before God I lie not." Our Lord does not contradict His own words by His actions; nor does the disciple contradict his Master; but the maxims laid down are to be interpreted with discretion. Maxims that are full of truth for scrupulous minds, are utterly false for loose livers. And again, what is true and wholesome for easy goers would be very untruthfully applied to timorous souls. "What is one man's food is another man's poison." Discretion it is which discerns what is fitting for each one.

The Saints were all guided by the Spirit of God, yet in what different ways! For instance, S. Francis being in very great pain, one of the Brothers said to him, "Father, why not ask our Lord to relieve you a little of your suffering." S. Francis replied: "O Brother, what do you say?" Then rising in an extasy from his bed, he threw himself on the ground and cried out, "O my Lord, I not only do not ask Thee to relieve my suffering, but I beg Thee, if it please Thee, to increase it a hundred fold." But S. Bernard being once in great anguish, asked two of the Brethren to go into the Church and pray God to give him a little relief. They had scarcely gone when our Lady entered the cell with S. Benedict and S. Lawrence, to whom the side altars were dedicated. Our Lady touched him in the parts afflicted with pain, and he was instantly cured. S. Bridget

also, being subject to a bad headache, was cured by S. Aidus at her own request.

S. Bruno kept women so at a distance that he never, on any pretext, allowed them to come near him. But S. John the Divine, appearing in a vision to S. Gertrude, said to her: "I never avoided women when I could be of any service to them, either for their souls or bodies." S. Teresa, when she heard the clock strike, used to congratulate herself that she had an hour less to live. But to S. Mechtilde it was revealed that those are most happy who are still alive, and that they ought to be full of joy when another day shines on them in which, by the grace of God, they may live to Him and increase their merit. All, therefore, must not be driven one road, but each should march in the freedom of the inspiration of God's Spirit.

That which is good in itself is not advisable in all circumstances. Recreation is good, but it is not discreet for Religious to recreate themselves too freely when people of the world are present. "How those Nuns did chatter," says one. "How silly was their talk. How I hate those giggling Nuns." S. Basil says "that men of the world should not be invited into the Monk's Refectory. These men," he says, "think Monks are Angels, and ought to live upon air. And when after a long fast they see them eat and drink with an appetite, they think it dreadful gluttony." It happened in a Convent that

the children had a tea-party, and some of the Nuns ate with the children, when one little girl was overheard to whisper to her companion, "I didn't know that Nuns liked cake." She had discovered that Nuns were not Angels. S. Thomas of Villanova, through discretion, would never eat in the presence of women. People of the world sometimes persuade Religious to eat and drink, and then they talk of it behind their backs to their great discredit.

There are some people who, on principle, never give a word of praise. Praise they look on as flattery, likely to puff a person up, likely to lead to vanity. This is bad discretion. How differently did Saint Paul act. His Epistles are full of praise, full of compliments, we might say. Where praise is just it is generally advisable to give it. Many distrust themselves. It is by seeing their efforts successful and approved of, that they are encouraged in their labours, and persevere in good.

In matters of obedience discretion is of great moment. The obedience of some people is like that of a stick. Take a stick in your hand, walk with it, or put it in a corner, or remove it to another corner, or hang it up on a peg, and in all circumstances it obeys exactly. Some people aim at the obedience of a stick as the very perfection of obedience. But the true perfection of obedience is that of a child, not the obedience of a stick. A child, when ordered

to do something, may reveal a circumstance to the person commanding which causes an instant counter-order of the thing enjoined. Had the circumstance been known before, or been remembered, the order would never have been issued at all.

A Superior might order one in health to do a thing which he would never order one whom he knew to be sick. Then, to hide the circumstance of sickness, or any other like circumstance, would make the obedience into disobedience,—disobedience, not to the letter of the command, but to the mind and intention of the person commanding. For, if he but knew the circumstances well, he would at once give a counter-command. This disobedience to the mind of the Superior is not actually sinful when the folly proceeds from a natural defect of discretion, and not of secret malice. It is, however, a great imperfection, disclosing the want of a simple child-like spirit, sourness of character, and secret self-will and vanity.

Discretion also is greatly needed in the virtue of truthfulness. Some persons think it only honest to blurt out sentiments that are disagreeable to others. They esteem a prudent silence to be a mean hypocrisy. So they show their dislikes and aversions from a false idea of being sincere and straightforward. Worldly people cloak their sentiments and feelings through a politic dissimulation; but religious

people rise above them by a high and heavenly tact, through holy charity.

Discretion is needed in the embracing of crosses. Some people take it as a maxim that whatever is disagreeable is the best, spiritually speaking. This is a delusion. When Mary was sitting at our Lord's feet it would have been very disagreeable to her to have had to get up and help her sister in the household work. It certainly seemed very selfish of her to let her sister bear all the burden, whilst she was enjoying herself, listening to our Lord's words. Martha wished to give the cross to her sister, but our Lord said No. Mary would have lost perfection by this act of charity. She had not a call from God to it. For her the best part was to sit quiet at our Lord's feet. It was best and most agreeable. Only those crosses sanctify which our Lord lays upon us. To take up crosses at random, or through self-will, is not the road to perfection. Discretion tells us when, where, and how to handle a cross; which crosses to leave and which to take up.

Even virtuous actions may be considerably spoiled by want of discretion in the way of doing them. Some do them just as people walk on stilts, in a stiff ungainly manner, so as to rob virtue of its grace, and make it appear hateful and detestable. Piety suffers much from such apprentices. They may be respected for their intentions, but they are very unlovely; and

unloveable. Discretion teaches how graciously to bend a bit to circumstances, and still retain the substance of virtue, waiving occasionally for a while what is not of essential obligation, or changing one good action for another. So virtue is both respected and loved, is graceful and amiable.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Machine.

THE principal duty of discretion is the care of the body. The body is the machine through which the soul works, and a life of prayer wastes the body away. Then, when the machine is out of order, all goes wrong; all is very up-hill work. Some people think that to be sickly is an advantage to spirituality. Alas! it is the very reverse. "*Few*," says a Kempis, "are sanctified by sickness: they, also, who travel much abroad seldom become holy." "To be sanctified by illness," says Father Faber in his Spiritual Conferences, "is one of the rarest phenomena of the spiritual life." Some of the greatest ascetic writers have noticed this. Sickness seldom improves a person. It requires a peculiar grace, and this grace God gives to few. As a traveller on a tired horse is utterly disappointed, and can reach but with much difficulty the end of his journey; such is the case of the soul with a sick body. She is frustrated. She can neither receive nor do that good, that would otherwise be in her power.

No one knows the sick man's sorrow but he who feels it: what a disadvantage it is to the

soul to be lodged in a disordered body, the understanding clouded, the memory weakened, the affections distempered; the whole frame of nature in fact disjointed, so that, like broken bones, it cannot move nor rest either. When sickness lasts long the body becomes lazy and listless, and a man has no relish for prayer, no heart to do active work. Sick people are generally eaten up with self. Their one interesting topic is to talk of their *feels*, their pains and aches, their changes for better and for worse. That virtue is indeed valiant that is not the worse for sickness. "The Infirmary of a Monastery," said S. Teresa, "is a place full of devils." The soul becomes sick in it as well as the body. Fervour so cools in it that those who hate to enter hate also to leave it. They propose to enter it just for a little while, and when they are once got in you cannot get them out.

To avoid this spider's web one of the sagest rules of discretion is to eat plenty. When S. Bernard first began his Religious life he confesses himself to have been too severe. He said Monks should bring their souls only into the Monastery, and leave their bodies outside. But afterwards he counselled such a care of the body that he said "that a Monk who ate too little was more faulty than one who ate too much." S. Philip Neri gives a like maxim, and as a reason for it, "that one who has made

himself ill by eating too little, seldom makes up the losses he has incurred in his sickness." S. Bernard also compares the body to a beast of burthen, which should have food and a stick, food to enable it to bear its master the soul, and a stick to compel it to do so.

Saint Teresa, in visiting her foundations, would hear no excuse for not keeping a plentiful table of simple, good, and wholesome food. Saint Ignatius used to say, that if a man did not eat well, neither could he pray well. To those who came to him for retreats he allowed an unlimited supply of bread, but flesh meat and other like things only in measure. S. Bonaventure says that no signs should be made in the Refectory, unless it be that the elder Friars should encourage the younger ones to eat sufficiently. Mother Margaret of Stone used to tell the Superiors to eat well, in order to encourage the Nuns to do the same. The Rule of the Sisters of Mercy very prudently orders, that never, on any pretext, shall the regular allowance of food or clothing be diminished.

The ascetic principle of eating well was practised in the ancient Monasteries of Egypt, where Cassian and Germanus could never entirely consume the large allowance of bread usually taken by the Monks. The pound of bread allowed by Saint Benedict, besides the two cooked dishes, weighed, according to the best authentic testimony, thirty-two ounces.

The Benedictine Monks of Battel Abbey in olden times had thirty-six ounces of the best bread daily, and nine ounces more in Lent. The Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, A.D. 816, composed of Abbots and learned men, ordered for Monks bread to the weight of thirty solids per day, forty-eight ounces for Canons, and thirty-six for Nuns. The principle ruled by this Council seems to be that the largest appetite should have enough, and that no one should be stinted. These large measures, however, are only to be understood of meagre diet.

Modern science pronounces the eating of flesh meat to be unfavourable to contemplation, or sustained mental action. Dr. Falconer says: "It so acts on the brain as to impede the finer efforts of the mind." Dr. Cheyne says, that Sir Isaac Newton, on this account, when he composed his ablest treatise on Optics, confined himself wholly to vegetable diet.

Those who require flesh meat should be very moderate in the quantity they take of it. Weak broth of flesh meat is admitted by S. Basil as good ascetic food. With a diet of bread and farinacea, fruit ought always to be added by those who would preserve health and strength, either raw, or cooked, or dried. To those who live on such diet, it is not a luxury, but a necessary. Grapes, figs, and dates were so used by the Egyptian Monks and Hermits, and by our Catholic forefathers in England. They

tempered their fasts with discretion. At the Abbey of Durham one Monk was named Master of the common house. "His office was to provide all such spices against Lent as should be comfortable to the Monks, under their great austerity both of fasting and praying, and to have a fire in the common house hall, for the Monks to warm themselves, and to provide figs and walnuts for Lent."

Besides fruit, wine or other fermented drink is a great help for those who live on meagre diet. The severe ascetic Saint Bernard removed his Abbey to a new site, because the first situation was not favourable to the growth of the vine. And when one of his brothers had cursed a vine, and caused it to be barren, S. Bernard took off the curse by a blessing, with holy water, and so rendered the vine fruitful. The Cistercian, Dr. Debreyne, a physician of note, says: "The qualities of wine to give strength and nourishment are sufficiently proved by what is witnessed every day in the cases of sick people, who exist solely on a few spoonfuls of wine daily; as also by the example of shipwrecked persons, who have sustained life for a considerable time with no other food than a little wine. Those on the frigate *Medusa* lived thirteen days with no other food. Persons who have to labour hard support their fatigues much better with poor food and a little wine, than with good food and

no wine." Liebig also, in his *Letters on Chemistry*, (xxix.) says that those who abstain altogether from fermented drinks, have to make up the loss they sustain by being huge feeders.

As gluttony is hateful to our Lord, so is a moderate discretion pleasing. Saint Gertrude was one morning eating some grapes to refresh her body. Having no vessel convenient, she threw the skins on the floor. Then she saw the devil approach his hand to take up the skins, so as to accuse her of sensuality. But no sooner had he attempted to touch them, than, as if they burnt him with hottest fire, he fled from them in great dismay. Thus the handmaid of God understood that her discreet refreshment of her body was highly agreeable to our Lord. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert we read how a certain Monk, who refused the little dainties provided at Easter, received a severe rebuke from one of the ancients for his intemperate austerity.

The body is to be kept in health, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the soul. S. Thomas reckons health as one of the six requisites for contemplation. S. Bonaventure says: "Sickness is not a favourable time for contemplation, unless by a special favour the Lord intervene. Violent hunger or thirst, severe pain, or other sufferings, equally hinder contemplation."

Want of necessary sleep ruins the health of the body even more than insufficient food. Sleep is the most imperious demand of nature. Soldiers sleep whilst marching. Men sleep on the rack in the intervals of torture. If we do not take sleep when we should, sleep will take us when it should not. Loss of sleep also enfeebles the intellectual faculties, the memory, and understanding, and unfits the soul for energetic prayer. It is therefore bad economy for a spiritual disciple to take little sleep in ordinary cases. Cases that are extraordinary fall under a special providence of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pure Prayer.

THERE are various kinds of prayer: each kind is good in its own order. It were too long to treat of these various kinds. For Meditation there are many special books. For prayer of Aspirations and Ejaculations, the "Easy Way to God," by Cardinal Bona, leaves nothing to be desired further. A few words, however, of explanation for those who have the gift of spiritual prayer, or who seek to be led towards it, may be of profit. This spiritual prayer is, according to Father Baker, that *pure* prayer which Saint Benedict directs, when made by the assembled Community, to be short. The word *pure* is used by Cassian to express a prayer made without the travail of the imagination. In his ninth Conference he thus speaks of it:

"This prayer (the Our Father), though it seems to contain in itself the fulness of perfection, being set on foot or instituted by the Lord's own authority, yet bears forward His familiar household to that still more exalted state of prayer, (*preces puras*), of which we have above made mention. (Chap. xv.) It

carries them through to that prayer all on fire, known and experienced by few, which is, to speak more properly, ineffable,—a prayer which wholly passes man's understanding. This prayer is not only made without sound of the voice, it has not even any motion of the tongue, or articulation of words. The mind, illumined by the infusion of celestial light—not marking out anything by human straitened utterance, but with all its senses and faculties gathered up together in one,—in an unutterable manner indites and pours it forth with richest plenty to the Lord, as from some most abundantly welling spring. And in that most short moment of time is teemed out more than could easily be spoken; or than the mind, returning to itself, is able to scan over.”

The degree of fulness in this prayer, which Cassian thus describes, varies from a simple recollection in God to the ravishment of ecstasy, but the character of the prayer is the same; that is, it is a pouring out of the whole soul into God without definite considerations, reflections, affections, or resolutions. S. Thomas gives three routes to God: 1, circular, by meditation; 2, oblique, by aspirations; 3, direct, by spiritual prayer. When the sun casts its full beams on a flower, the flower opens itself out wider and wider, drinking in the life-giving rays, and, in return, breathing forth its richest perfumes. Such is the direct going forth of

the soul to God. A glance of the eye tells a person more of our love than a thousand words. So in this up-lifting of the soul without noise of words, a thousand acts of love, gratitude, compunction, &c., are breathed forth towards God in the way that He can understand, but no one else takes knowledge of, and we ourselves cannot measure what we do, or accurately determine.

This prayer is not idleness, though we say not a word, make no petition. Like the silence of Moses, prostrate on his face, it is a loud cry in the ears of God; only Moses' cry was one of supplication, and this is a cry of love. It is the soul simply happy, resting at home in her God. What to her is the world beside? She is content. My Beloved is mine, and I am His. Of all moments of prayer these moments are the most precious, for the soul is penetrated with the unction from above. Around her and within her is the transforming light of God. It passes away; but it has done its work, even though imperfections immediately after arise to humble the soul, and make her perhaps almost to think that all was a sort of dream, an illusion. Even imperfect souls have occasional visits; but those whom God wishes to draw close to Himself, He comes to with greater frequency. It is not a sign always of perfection attained, but of perfection invited to; a call to a higher life.

If the gift that God bestows at intervals be well used, by care and careful keeping it becomes more stable, and sometimes almost habitual. A holy old man used to visit the Church of the Curé of Ars who had the gift of this prayer. He was a poor working man, and came for his visit when his toil was done. He stopped a long time, and used no book, nor did his lips move. The Curé, one evening, doubting of him, asked him what he did all those hours. The old man glanced up simply into his face and said: "I look at Him, and He looks at me." This was his employment. This was the whole of his simple prayer,—a blessed exchange between himself and our Lord of looks of love.

Some birds, after flying for awhile, cease to agitate their wings, and simply sail along through the air, by the force they have already acquired. This is the kind of thing which takes place in this prayer of recollection. When their force is spent then the birds ply their wings again. So must we, when recollection fails, have recourse to our efforts, till by grace we rise again into God. In the state of recollection, when the soul seems inactive, it is never really so. Its activities are only more secret and subtle. The humming bird, when it sucks nectar from the flowers, never alights on them, but poises itself somehow in the air above them, free from all apparent motion. So it feeds.

The kestrel, in the same manner, poises itself high up in the air, seemingly motionless, its wings folded down over its feet. But naturalists have discovered that two very small pinions, close by its side, are still kept moving with ceaseless vibration. So the soul, when seemingly idle, and doing nothing, but simply passive, in the prayer of recollection, is not really so, but in its hidden powers still works and leans upon God.

It is not, however, wise to strain ourselves to keep continually recollected in God. Saint Teresa says that the will is often fast glued to God when the imagination is roving wildly. The imagination is a faculty we cannot fetter and confine at pleasure. If it does wander about we are not to be disturbed, provided it does not take our heart with it. If our love is fixed firmly on God we need not much mind these aimless vagaries of the imagination. If a child is in its mother's arms it may look about, and its attention may be attracted to different objects; but it never really forgets where it is, nor do the distractions cause it to value less its mother's love and care. If a child, again, is in the room with its mother, she does not wish to keep it pinned in one position at her feet, with fixed attention on her. She lets it go about a bit, and only sometimes calls it to her side, and insists on a fixed attention. The child, on its part, always retains a sense of its mother's

presence, though it makes no reflection on it,—does not think specially about it. So God does not mind the out-wanderings of our vagabond imaginations when He is secure of our will, and of the affections of our heart. Nor need we be uneasy. It is not well to be on a continual strain. A bow bent too tight snaps. We must be moderate. For some people have a flighty, fickle, freakish, unsteady imagination, which will be continually running hither and thither, settle for a moment and be off again,—ungovernable.

We must beg God's pardon for our ill-manners, and assure Him that our will is His. But in this life there must be an ebb and flow; and we cannot be always intensely occupied with God. Even the Saints were not. Saint Antony in the desert, being one day a prey to confusion of thoughts, said to God: "I wish to be saved, and my thoughts will not let me. What shall I do in this trouble?" Then rising, he went out and saw one like himself, sometimes sitting at work, and sometimes rising to pray; then again sitting at work, and presently again rising. God taught him by this vision that there must be some cessation of actual prayer. Such interruptions must be more or less frequent, longer or shorter, according to each one's call and power of sustaining prayer.

Saint Bonaventure says: "We ought diligently to seize on circumstances and opportu-

nities favourable to prayer, whether of place or time, of interior calm, or of an interior movement, or of the good disposition of our affections. He who lets go these circumstances will find them in their turn fly from him; so we must make our hay while the sun shines.

Whilst on our journey to the heavenly country none are called to a life of contemplation only. All are called to a mixed life, partly of activity, partly of prayer. In contemplative houses many active works are carried on within the house. In mixed and active Orders works of charity are undertaken for persons in the world. In such works there are three degrees of attention to be given. The *first* degree is when the work is of such a nature as to absorb our whole mind, and to require an undivided attention. The *second* degree of attention is a moderate attention. The *third* degree is a mechanical attention. The latter kind of works are most suited to persons called to contemplation, because they afford a relief to the mind without engaging it much. The first kind are, however, when occasionally undertaken for God, no real hindrance to the most contemplative spirits. For such souls the moment they are released return to God with such a hunger for Him that in a short while they more than make up for the losses sustained.

But some persons can actually pray better when engaged in active work than when they

are perfectly still on their knees in the church. They are more recollected when busy than when wholly at leisure. Activity is a help to prayer, not a hindrance; just as some persons when they are thinking intensely get up and begin to walk about. The walking up and down helps the intensity of their thought. The rule for one is not the rule for another. Each one in these matters must follow his own call, and do that which experience assures him is best for his own soul.

CHAPTER XV,

Abstraction.

PRAYER is said to be the lifting up of the soul to God. But how can that soul rise to God that is glued to the things of the senses? How is it possible for a person to pray well before whose mind float the visions of his breakfast? Any extreme of cold, hunger, or pain, is a foe to prayer. It is for this reason S. Teresa demands for meditation that the body should not be in an uncomfortable posture. In order to be able habitually to pray well we must get the body lifted up above many artificial wants which are distractions. This is not so very difficult. Nature requires little, and grace less. The senses must be trained by the retrenchment of all that is luxurious. They must never be allowed their fill; and what is given them must be given, not for their own satisfaction, but for the advantage of the soul.

It was to deaden the artificial activity of the senses that the Eastern Monks chose horrid deserts for their abodes, where there was nothing calculated to gratify the eye. It is on this account that, at the present day, the

furniture of a Religious cell is so plain and rude. No elegancies, no rich pictures are there, to feed the senses; no feather bed at night; no easy-cushioned arm-chair after the toils of the day are over; no scents or worldly perfumes, such as are met with in the drawing rooms of the great; no concerts, or bands of music; no soft sensuous lullaby airs. The withdrawing of all these things is the remote disposition for prayer. This lily grows only amongst the thorns.

We see this in the examples of men of prayer. Saint Bernard was so dead to the delights of the senses that, having travelled all day by the banks of a beautiful lake, it was found in the evening that he had never seen it. Riding on a horse magnificently caparisoned, he had never noticed its trappings. S. Teresa was so careful to deaden her senses that she had a scruple about using a certain beautiful picture as an incentive to her devotions, till our Lord assured her that it was not the beauty of the painting that pleased her, but rather the truthfulness with which it brought before her the bitterness of His passion. S. Augustine so suspected his senses that he half reproves himself for the delight he took in the Church music, lest it should be rather a hidden gratification of the senses than the lifting up of the soul to God. Our Lord once told S. Gertrude that her prayer during the work of

God had not been fully pleasing to Him, because her attention had been partly caught by the sweetness of the Nuns' voices in chanting the psalmody.

It may be perhaps impossible, with all our efforts, to reach that deadness of the senses that is put before us in the examples of the Saints, but we may do a something towards its attainment by habitually withdrawing our attention from things that strike them. For instance, not to look in, through curiosity, at an open door as we pass it. If we observe some one coming, not to cast our eyes that way to see who it is. By constant practice of abstraction we may deaden the activity of the senses a good deal. The very smallest things distract: the buzzing of a fly, the sound of a door opening. If we see a pin on the ground, the mind immediately reflects, "There is a pin." The attention is caught, and so far is turned away from God and from our prayer. It is for this reason that S. Benedict requires a hushed silence in the Church when any one is praying, and S. Columbanus would not allow the Brethren even to cough in the Church.

To notice a fly walking on a pane of glass distracts the attention. But when the senses wander the will often cleaves firmly to God. Such distractions are harmless compared with those in which the affections of the soul are entangled. If a friend has visited us, and we

have been pleased with what was said, or annoyed, or he has brought us some interesting news, there will be a much greater danger. We shall be inclined to go over the scene again in our own minds; to think what was said and the answers we gave. His voice will still ring in our ears, the tone and the accent; his face will vision itself before our eyes, and that without any profit to us, nay, perhaps to our great hurt. We ought, therefore, on such occasions, to throw a dark cloud between us and such memories, especially whilst they are fresh and vivid. With all our efforts to wipe them away, we shall be sure to remember quite enough and too much.

Saint Catherine of Genoa obtained from God, as a special favour, that when she had done any act of charity, the memory of it should at once completely flit away. This was a very great grace. It enabled her to be recollected in God in the midst of activity. What she had done left no trace in the time of prayer. Dame Gertrude More in her later years attained to a measure of this same grace. Saint Stephen Harding was observed by a Brother to linger a while at the Church door before entering, and being asked why he did so, he said that he gathered up all his cares into a bundle and left them at the door till he came out. S. Gregory says that this same relinquishing of all earthly cares for prayer is signified by the words of

Abraham to his young men: "Stay ye here by the ass, and I and the boy will go with speed as far as yonder, and after we have worshipped will return to you."

Before prayer it is advisable to clear ourselves of all that may distract. If we have a letter to write, Saint Teresa took care to have it done before prayer; if not, we shall find ourselves composing our letter instead of making prayer. All anxious business should be dispatched at once, that the mind may regain its wonted calm. If we have to obtain an interview with some one, for the settling of some annoying affair, or arranging of something that interests us, the sooner it is done and over the better. Such cares as we are not bound to by obedience it is well to cut off. Charity, however, may sometimes oblige us to what is not our vocation or our duty; or God may urge a thing by His inspirations on our conscience. In these cases we must give up the calm of our recollection to the business of active good works, even though our prayer be hindered. But in our good works we should detach our minds from all anxiety, resting all upon God, feeling sure that by all our care we cannot change one hair white or black.

The mind is apt often to forestall evils and difficulties which may perhaps never arrive. It gets into a turmoil preparing and planning to meet what perhaps never comes. The spirit

of prayer is lost and much time wasted. Saint Gregory calls this a great mistake. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Evils are evils, it is true. The Christian does not aim at the callous indifference of the Stoic. Christians have their sorrows and their joys, but both are tempered by the peace of God. We ought never to pour ourselves out fully upon anything, but always keep a reserve for God, looking at things and loving things in Him. So, when any thing seems to be getting too deep a hold of us, we should wilfully distract our mind from it, and divert our thoughts into some other interesting channel, so as to break somewhat the power of this thing over us. By this proceeding we may become masters of our thoughts, bidding them come and go at will, as the centurion in the Gospel did his servants. This is true freedom.

By abstraction the soul is emptied of creatures, and prepared for communion with God. By abstraction we may get in a measure to hear without hearing, to see without seeing, our attention being elsewhere, raised up into God, lost in God.

CHAPTER XVI.

Recollection.

MANY people complain of their distractions at prayer. Their meditation is a battle, from beginning to end, against distractions. They turn out the intruding thoughts, but their labour is like that of driving away a swarm of flies on a hot summer's day. Scarcely are they banished before they come again. They wonder how it is, and feel in despair. There need, however, be no wonder. During the rest of the day their thoughts are kept under no control, but are allowed to wander at random, where they will, like sheep without a shepherd. The consequence is, that when an attempt is made to curb them, they are not used to it, and will not yield. If then, we would be able to concentrate our thoughts on God and holy things at the time of prayer, we must habitually, during the rest of the day, curb and bridle and direct our thoughts, bringing them into captivity, and rendering them obedient to us.

It is said of Socrates that sometimes his whole mind was so concentrated on some thought on which he was pondering, that he lost the consciousness of what was passing

around, completely immersed in his thought. And thus he would stand for hours in the same position, sometimes out in the open air, and through the whole night. Plato tells us this of him. If any one spoke to him he heard it not. He saw not what was going on before his eyes. He was in what we call a state of abstraction. Now if we could be like that at the time of our prayer, lost in God, or in thoughts leading up to God, our prayer then would be much more fruitful. It would render us heavenly. It would wean us from earthly desires and earthly ways. It would transform our whole being into something higher, purer, and holier.

This kind of abstraction we may in a measure get if we choose to pay the price for it. If we do not choose to pay, then let us honestly confess that, though we should like well to have the gift of prayer, yet we are not willing to pay the price. It costs too much. God will give the gift of prayer to those who prepare themselves properly for it. And Ruysbroek teaches us that the soul is like a mirror, in the deep fund of which God is to be seen reflected. But to behold Him the soul must be free from distractions. Distractions may be guarded against in various ways. One way is to act as the Angels do, who, though occupied in ministering to men, yet always behold the Face of God, never losing sight of His Divine Pres-

ence. In our outward employments we must take pattern by our Lord, who, when He descended from heaven into this world, still remained firmly seated in heaven, from whence He came; just as the sun sends forth its rays, but ever retains in itself the source of the light which it diffuses. Saint Gertrude was once seen in a vision by one of the Sisters, as it were walking before our Lord; but whichever way she turned she always kept her face fixed upon Him. By this the Sister understood that Gertrude, however much employed in outward things, never lost her recollection of our Lord's Presence.

Another plan for recollection is to make outward things as stepping stones to rise up into God. Thus, if I see a painted dragon-fly flit across the road, or I see a butterfly basking in the sunbeams, I may at once rise from the sight of these sensible objects to the God who made them. I may thank God for the thrilling pleasure which these insects of a day enjoy, or for the glorious beauty with which He has clothed them. A traveller, lost in the wilds of Africa, and all alone, began to feel in despair, when his eye was caught by the most exquisite beauty of a leaf of fern. The thought at once struck him: "Can God ever abandon me here, who even in that leaf so manifestly exerts His power?" So he took courage, and God was not wanting to his confidence in Him.

Nature is full of God, and there is not much difficulty in rising from creation to the thought of the Creator, and so recollecting ourselves in Him. But in the midst of worldly diversions there is need of greater effort. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary used to take a prayer-book to the theatre, so as to distract her attention from its gay show, and bring her back to God. Saint Francis of Sales advised his worldly penitents, when they went to a ball, to divide their attention by thinking how many persons had danced themselves into hell. A meditation like that, he said, would keep them safe in the midst of the fire. Distractions about worldly things, when we are at prayer, show that the heart is hurtfully entangled by these gay vanities. That which does not interest us makes no deep impression on us. The impression fades away almost immediately. We pass along a street, and in doing so see a hundred faces, but we could not swear to one of them. We saw them as we see the stones on the road, without taking any deep interest in them. What we take interest in recurs of itself to the memory, comes unbidden to the windows, especially in times of quiet, such as that of prayer.

Another way of practising ourselves in recollection is, when we find ourselves getting over-eager in our work, to break off for a bit from it, and go to something else. For to make our work a passion is ruinous to the soul. We

must preside over it, not let it drag us on, or master us. The same thing must be done in the turmoil of visits, of business affairs, and talking. Saint Catherine of Sienna used, on these occasions, to keep a little chapel in her heart for our Lord, into which she entered from time to time, to adore before Him. She thus prevented herself from being overwhelmed with affairs, and kept herself recollected in peace amidst all the tumult.

Recollection has two handmaids, viz., mortification and abstraction. These differ from each other, though in a measure they compass the same end. Mortification seeks by positive efforts to dull and deaden the senses and the passions, refusing to them what they like, and making them submit to what they do not like, until they lose their vivacity. Abstraction escapes, as it were, by a side door, diverting the attention from what distracts to some other thing. With the creature it mixes up the thought of the Creator, so as to break the force of the earthward attraction. To practice this abstraction, if we hear some one enter the room, we should refuse to examine who it is. We should not even think, "Who is that?" If our attention is caught by the rain pattering heavily on the roof, or a storm cloud darkening the air, it shows a want of abstraction. But recollection transcends these things. As a burning glass gathers the scattered rays of the

sun into one focus, so the soul's powers are by recollection centred in God. When the creature comes between her and God she passes beyond, through the creature into the Creator, who is blessed for ever. In Him alone she finds her rest.

Saint Paul of the Cross, as he walked through the fields, used gently to strike the flowers with his stick, and say: "Be quiet. I know what you are saying: you are telling me to love God." The mind that is full of God gets to transcend creatures. Saint Paul did not so much see the flowers as he was reminded by them of the God who had made them.

CHAPTER XVII.

Holy Communion.

OF all the powerful helps that our Lord has given us, to bring us on our road to paradise, none equals that of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the sap of the soul, full of the materials of a new and heavenly life, the life of Jesus Christ Himself. The Holy Communion imparts Christ to the soul, that He may be the life of her life. And although the work of the Blessed Sacrament in the soul is of an insensible nature, it is none the less sure and certain. On this account faithful souls will strive so to live, as to be able to communicate with profit frequently. "The Council of Trent," says Schram, "would wish all to communicate daily, if it could be done fruitfully and with due devotion, but does not command it absolutely to all, scarcely daring to hope to secure commonly that disposition of perfection." So that the same Council is content to see that Nuns be admonished to receive Holy Communion at least once a month.

The gift in Holy Communion is so great that one Communion received with perfect dispositions would make the receiver into a Saint.

The fruit of Holy Communion depends principally on the dispositions of the receiver. This is why, in the middle ages, when Communion was made comparatively seldom, yet sanctity was attained, because these Saints got more grace by one fervent Communion than lukewarm people gain by many Communions. It is not so much the number as the fervency of Communions that profits the soul. Our Lord revealed to Saint Gertrude that those Priests who celebrated formally, and through custom only, had no share in His gifts. "Freedom from mortal sin saves a communicant from sacrilege," says Schram; "but to frequent Communion a closer sifting of the conscience is necessary." Otherwise it will not profit. If a field is overcast with stones, and covered with noxious weeds, it is to no purpose to sow plenty of seed, the harvest will not be abundant. Pick out the stones, and root out the weeds, and then a much smaller quantity of seed will produce a larger crop. A farmer proportions the amount of his seed to the goodness and preparation of the land. If the ground be rich and well prepared, he sows more; if poor and little prepared, he sows less. Without this discretion his seed would be wasted. So the amount of our Communions must be apportioned, as a general rule, to the preparedness of our souls. Exceptional cases are given to the judgment of the Priest.

One who seldom falls into mortal sin may safely and with profit communicate once a week, even though he not unfrequently commit venial sins with deliberation. But it is not advisable for such to communicate oftener. None ought ever to communicate without permission. S. Gertrude tells us of a Nun who was punished with a five months sickness for so doing. The Corinthians through careless Communions brought upon themselves much sickness, and sometimes even death. God punishes His elect by temporal pains, that He may spare their souls in eternity. Desire, therefore, for Communion must be moderated by obedience. S. Teresa mentions, as a temptation of the devil, an excessive and inordinate desire for Communion in two of her Nuns. The rule of Saint Pachomius, given him by an Angel, prescribes Communion once a week. Cassian, with the Abbot Theonas, gives weekly Communion as the rule. S. Onuphrius, in the desert, received for sixty years the Holy Communion, once a week, from the hand of an Angel.

For Communion more than once a week, the first rule which Schram gives for daily communicants is applicable; namely, that each one's own conscience should testify as to the requisite dispositions. The desire of frequent Communion must come from God's Holy Spirit to the soul, says Father Dalgairns. He is its Director in this, as in other matters. Saint

Thomas says: "Each one ought to consider in himself what effect is wrought in him by the frequent receiving of this Sacrament. At festival seasons a person may communicate oftener with fruit, than at times when there is nothing special to excite devotion." Unmarried persons, says S. Jerome, may approach with profit more frequently than those who are engaged in the worldly cares of a household. Those who, from any cause, are disengaged, and have both the time and the will for devout exercises, may approach more frequently than such as have no time for prayer. A good thanksgiving after prayer is one of the main matters, according to S. Teresa, for profitably receiving this Sacrament. To invite our Lord into our house, and when He is come to leave Him without any entertainment, is but a poor welcome. Let us be sure, if we so treat Him, He will make us no presents.

But prayer by itself is not enough. In order that our ground may bring forth plentifully, we must dig it well by austerities. We must drain it by mortification of ill-humours and noxious matter. We must put in the plough of pain, mental or bodily. We must enrich the soil with active virtues, visiting the sick, teaching the ignorant, bestowing alms according to our power, doing offices of kindness, employing ourselves in menial work, and the like. Without these things prayer is a

sickly thing. These instruments of good works give it its true life. These are the presents we must offer to our Lord on His arrival, and not appear before Him with our hands empty.

As our good works and our inward virtues, together with a spirit of prayer and recollection in God increase, we may increase also the number of our Communion, with the sanction of our spiritual guide. We may make three, four, or even five Communion in the week. "*Very few indeed,*" says Vasquez, "*are fit for daily Communion.*" Saint Francis of Sales requires that for this the bad inclinations of the soul should have been already conquered for the most part. S. John of the Cross says that too daring a spirit in this matter is a thing that brings on falls into grave evil, and there is room for the fear of a severe and just punishment of such a rash proceeding. Saint Thomas says, that on account of the many hindrances to devotion, through indisposition of soul and body, daily Communion is not useful to all. Schram concludes that, from defect of due devotion, or through distraction and vain affections, or a mind somewhat perverse, the soul becomes indisposed, and that by receiving the Holy Eucharist in this state, a huge heap (*ingens cumulus*) of venial sins, is rather increased than lessened, such sins being only remitted by the Holy Eucharist to those rightly disposed.

Discretion is therefore necessary in this, as in other matters. We may have too much of a good thing. For the body certain kinds of food are very strengthening, but to live on them alone, or to fill ourselves with them to the very full, far from being profitable to the body, would be hurtful to it. It is with the soul, as with the body; the best food must still be taken only with discretion and in measure. When we are unable to bring to Holy Communion a fitting preparation and devotion, we shall do well occasionally to leave it, not from negligence or sloth, but from a due reverence to so holy a Presence. S. Gertrude, once finding herself, through weakness, hardly able to go to Holy Communion, asked our Lord whether she was to go or not. He advised her to abstain. She made instead a spiritual communion, and our Lord gave her no less graces than to those who had made an actual Communion, because she had abstained with discretion and by obedience. Surin, Scupoli, and Scaramelli, affirm that some souls receive sometimes greater graces through a spiritual than through an actual Communion.

Where there is a custom of going frequently to Communion, it is best, when our dispositions are at all equal to it, to go ourselves often; oftener than we should do where Communion was less frequent. In Communities it is best to be content with the good common

custom of the house, and rather to deprive ourselves of our satisfaction in this matter, than give rise to discontents and disunion. Such is the advice of Schram and of Saint Teresa, for no pest is more intolerable in Community life than singularities.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Abiding Presence.

IT is reported in the Gospel that Zacheus the publican, desiring to see our Lord, and not being able for the crowd, being short of stature, ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree. Our Lord, coming to the place, looked up, and seeing him, said: "Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house."

Such is the story of the Gospel; but in their mystical meaning these words speak of that abiding presence of Christ which He vouchsafes to us in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

1. Now in the Holy Eucharist there are three different gifts by which Christ unites Himself to us with an abiding presence. The first is the gift of His holy Body. Even to the wicked Christ gives His Body, though, like Judas, they welcome His presence with the kiss of treachery. The wicked are made tabernacles, for the time, of the Holy of Holies, but no real union takes place between Him and them. The foulest spot on earth were more grateful to Him than the sin-stained temple of an un-

repentant soul, unhallowed and profaned. But with the faithful it is otherwise. That holy Body blends itself with theirs by an intimate and mystical union, so close that Saint Cyril compares it to the melting and mingling of two pieces of wax the one with the other; and we are changed, says Saint Augustine, into that which we eat. This union, so close, makes Saint Paul to cry horror-struck: "Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" Thus it is that Christ's Blessed Body tempers our body, and sheds its changing influence on that flesh which is the seat of so many passions, harmonizing its qualities, and spiritualizing its nature, so that, even in this life, the body of our lowness is reformed, and made like, in some measure, to the Body of His glory, according to that operation whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

2. The second blessed gift in the Holy Eucharist is the union of our souls with the soul of Christ. It is said in the First Book of Kings that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." Love had wedded these two souls together, and they formed as it were but one soul; the same sentiments, the same desires, the same interests. How it is that one soul instils itself into another, melts and mingles itself with another, how souls affect and

are affected by each other, is to us very mysterious. There are hidden laws at work here which we cannot fathom, which pass the reach of our ordinary philosophy. Yet to deny them were to deny ourselves. We see mighty souls winning their way through all obstacles, entering the souls of others, and fertilizing them with their own ideas, conforming and fashioning their wills after the pattern of their own. We see souls mutually receiving from and giving of their stock to each other; changing and modifying each other's sentiments and character. It is true that these effects are brought about in great measure through the instrumentality of the body, the speech, the eye, the hand; but beneath this envelope we know that the soul is the acting worker. It is the soul which touches the soul, firing it into enthusiasm, lifting it to aims lofty and sublime, bending it to humble subjection. And not unfrequently the soul seems to cast aside the trammels of the body, and to communicate with another soul directly, even irrespective of distance of place. Such instances are common in the lives of the Saints.

When Christ gives to us His Body in the holy Eucharist, His Soul enters at the same time, and, by a blessed amalgamation, unites Itself to our souls, communicating to them His own sentiments, lights, and aims. For eighteen centuries our Lord has been carrying on in the

world this admirable work, the features of His own Blessed Soul re-appearing in the souls of His chosen ones. For it is not they who live, but He who lives in them. He is the life of their life; by an energetic, inward, abiding presence, forming them to His own image, and making them to grow up to Him in all things.

3. But over and above these gifts of His Soul and Body there is a third, still more sublime, which is given to us in the Holy Eucharist. It is that our Lord as God comes personally to take up His abode in us. "We will come to him," He says, "and make Our abode with him." As of old He entered into Egypt on a swift cloud; so now, within the misty veil of the Blessed Sacrament, He enters into the soul. He penetrates into its very fund, into that inmost sanctuary of the spirit which none but God can reach. In that secret shrine He sets up His royal throne, and He calls before Him all the powers of the soul, to swear Him fealty and do Him homage. From thence He issues His commands, directing, by inspiring movements, all our faculties, both of mind and body. Nothing escapes Him. He reaches from end to end, ordering all things sweetly and mightily, from the highest to the lowest. By this mystical union with our Lord as God, man is raised above himself, and is made a partaker of the Divine Nature, according to the expression of

the Apostle: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

This is the climax of all. But these sublime gifts are only made over to the faithful in proportion to the goodness of their dispositions. Simon, like Zacheus, received our Lord into his house, but salvation did not come to his house on that account. For he received our Lord with no honour, no earnestness of devotion. He gave Him no kiss, no water for His feet, no oil for His head. Simon was not a sinner like Zacheus. He was a good man, but he loved little, and so his reception of our Lord benefited him but little. Zacheus was a sinner. When he ran on and climbed up the sycamore tree, he never expected that our Lord would take notice of him in the tree, looking up, and so giving him an opportunity of clearly beholding that Face so full of majesty and sweetness. And oh! how much less did he think that our Lord would address him, would call him by his name, telling him to make haste and come down, for that on that day He would abide at his house. What a rush of feelings in tumultuous tide filled his heart at that moment;—surprise, delight, reverence, fear, love; but joy overmastered all, and principally prevailed. What a change for Zacheus that day! From a sinner he became a son of Abraham; from a wicked man he became a Saint. He gives at

once half his goods to feed the poor, and his wrongs he restores fourfold.

Our Lord is gone on His way. Yet He is not gone, for He has obtained such an entry into the soul of Zacheus that He will never again quit it. He is gone, yet remains. In the soul of Zacheus that day is eternal; its scenes unfadingly fresh: the look of our Lord's Face into the tree, the accents of His voice as He spoke, His entry into the house, and his own tingling emotions of love, gratitude, and joy. Our Lord has printed Himself on his soul so indelibly that He cannot be removed. Zacheus, too, holds Him fast there with the embraces of a love that shall not slacken.

- In the history of Zacheus we behold the type of a fruitful Communion. How many there are who receive our Lord like Simon the Pharisee. It is not He who invites them, but they who invite Him. Their hearts are cankered, eaten up with worldliness, and our Lord can scarce find in them where to lay His Head. But it is the custom of the present day to communicate frequently, and they would not be behindhand. They wish to prove that their worldliness is *exterior*, and their piety *interior*. The same love little, and the fruit of their Communion is little. In order not to be barren we must love much. Then our Lord will first invite Himself to our house, and will press us to receive Him. We shall welcome Him with joy,

our heart teeming over with simple happiness. And when the sacred species are dissolved, He will still remain, by an abiding presence, united with us, the perennial source of all our good.

“This day I must abide in thy house.” Do so, O Lord, even as Thou hast said. Abide, oh! if Thou only wilt, all the day of this mortal perishable life. Then, through Thy gracious indwelling, I shall be secured and made safe to abide with Thee during the never-ending Day of life everlasting.

CHAPTER XIX.

Recreation.

RECREATION, in one shape or other, may be said to be an integral part of the spiritual life. It is not loss of time, but does its quota towards the perfecting of the soul. We cannot be always on the strain, either in prayer or active charity. Nature has its continual ebbs and flows; its spring and its winter; its alternate dark and light: and true perfection complies with nature, though not subservient to it. Cassian relates of S. John, that one day, when he was playing with a pet partridge, a huntsman came upon him, and expressed great surprise to find him engaged in what he thought so trivial an occupation. Saint John told him that, as the bow he held in his hand required to be unstrung that it might, when used, have a stronger energy, so the mind of man cannot be always contemplating high things, but must bend to some relaxation. We may be sure that if Saint John required recreation much more do we.

Saint Bonaventure, however, complains that novices in the spiritual art do not always consider this. "Those who are ignorant of a

trade," he says, "do not know the use of certain instruments in it. As worldly people are astonished to see spiritual persons do such and such things, it is best, then, that these things should not be done before them, lest scandal be given." As the great Dr. Johnson was one day recreating himself with some friends, he saw approaching them a man who, he thought, would consider such mirth very unbecoming to learned men; so he broke off abruptly, saying, "Let us look grave now; there's a fool coming." What is right and useful in itself, is not on that account to be done before every one.

A philosopher one day, coming to see one of the Saints of the Desert, found him playing at see-saw with some children. His worldly wisdom was astonished. Yet Socrates, the wisest of the philosophers, was accustomed to play with children. Cardinal Richlieu, when at the head of the state in France, received a visit one day from one of the nobles on important political affairs. The nobleman, not finding him in his room, went to seek him in the garden, and there discovered him engaged with his groom in a jumping match, to see which could jump the furthest.

Among the Jesuits it is a part of their Rule that they shall not study more than two hours without a pause to unbend the mind. The learned Petavius, during this pause of a few minutes, used to rise from his seat, and twirl

his chair round and round, so as to break the fixity of his attention. "On recule pour mieux sauter," says the French proverb. New vigour is given both to mind and body by intervals of recreation, by which the time thus spent is amply compensated for. The earth, when allowed to lie fallow for a year, makes up by rich crops more than the loss occasioned. After all our progress in the science of farming, it is hard to find a better plan than the old fallow. A continued succession of crops, without much artificial help, does not answer.

Saint Augustine calls pleasure a necessary item in the well ordering of the soul. It is for this reason, says S. Bonaventure, that Religious houses are built with spacious corridors, and are adorned with beautiful gardens, and that sometimes more dainty food is given. The guarding of the inner man, and resisting temptations, is a wearing thing both to mind and body, and Religious require some relief. They must not go out into the world for it; they must have it close at hand. It is a mistake to suppose that a life of prayer is a life of idleness and leisure. Father Baker well likens prayer to a "dumb file," which wastes the body without making any noise. Inward activity of soul, however subtle and spiritual, is not less exhaustive than outward activity. Nature requires to be borne up and assisted by recreation, so that the body may repair its

vigour a little, and so again lend itself to co-operate with the soul.

In Religious Communities certain times are generally set apart for recreation. These times are more or less frequent in various Orders. Most have them every day. Some, as the Maurists, have them three times a week. The Carthusians and Camaldulose have but one fixed recreation in the week as part of the Rule. Such work of the hands as is not very fatiguing acts also as a sort of recreation, enabling the soul the better for prayer, after such intermission. The Carthusians walk out into the country for several hours, passing the time likewise in conversation. Although ridiculous buffoonery and loud shouts of laughter do not become spiritual persons, yet the most saintly persons may make merry in their speech. The conversation of S. Gregory Nazianzen, S. Epiphanius, S. Macarius, and S. Athanasius, was full of sweet pleasantries. S. Bernard praises Peter the Venerable for joining gravity with recreative speech. So S. Benedict does not exclude all laughter, but gives as the fifty-fifth instrument of good works, "not to love too much or loud laughter."

In Religious houses, even if the perfect could do entirely without any recreation, always lost in God, yet this would not be the case with the less perfect. And S. Bonaventure remarks that "Religion is a school, in which all the

pupils are not equally gifted, nor all equally industrious; some are very dunces." But as a fact all require some interruption of actual prayer. S. Philip Neri used forcibly to divert himself from being absorbed in God by the reading of some amusing book, or other like contrivance. When persons require recreation time cannot be better employed. S. Charles Borromeo was once playing a game of chess when the question was started, What each one would do if he knew Christ was coming in judgment? One said he would go to the Church; another that he would make his confession; and so each expressed his thought. Then it was asked of S. Charles what he would do. He replied: "I should go on with my game of chess. I began it for the glory of God, and I could not be found better employed than in that which I continue for God's glory." All then perceived that S. Charles was right, and that our recreation, like everything else, is holy to the Lord, when undertaken with a pure motive and intention.

In Communities, when to any one recreation is not pleasurable, but burdensome, then it becomes a work of great merit. For by charity for others we may be merry when our hearts are heavy; or we may put up with things that to us are disagreeable for the common good. If so we lose our recreation, God will support us under our trial.

BOOK III.

THE FAR-OFF SCENE.

"Then Moses went up upon Mount Nebo, and
the Lord showed him all the land."


DEUT. XXXIV. 1,

Book the Third.

THE FAR-OFF SCENE.

CHAPTER I.

Resurrection of Christ.

HEN our Lord rose again from the dead, it took all His disciples quite by surprise. They had never looked forward to such a conclusion of the dark drama of His Passion.

But it was something more than a glad surprise. It was a revelation of secrets higher than all the marvels they had ever hitherto witnessed. Our Lord's life with them had been a life of miracles. They had seen the blind receive their sight, the lepers cleansed, the dead raised. But all these wonders were little compared with that most marvellous thing which quite surpassed them all,—that He Himself, when slain, should triumph over the grave; when seemingly defeated, should sing the song of victory, crying: "Fear not, I am alive, and was dead; and behold! I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell."

1. When our Lord rose again from the dead, and showed Himself to His disciples, they could not enter at once into the fulness of the mystery that had taken place. Their eyes were not used to the strangeness of this new light. It was only by degrees that, getting accustomed to it, they began to behold all that was revealed to them by its rays. At first the glory of its splendour was so dazzling as almost to overpower their feeble vision. They were in a maze. The light shone in their darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. They saw, and yet they saw not. They knew not what it was that they saw,—what was the nature of that body which our Lord had re-taken, what kind of life it now lived, and what results to themselves were the outcome and fruit of His rising from the dead. It was to enlighten their understandings on these subjects, and by manifest signs to bring home His teaching to them, that our Lord arranged His various appearances after His Resurrection.

2. He had really risen again. The Body which He showed them was not a mere appearance. It was not of subtle air, but solid. "Handle Me," He said, "and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me to have." It was the same wounded Body that had hung on the Tree,—His own Body, not another. For He said: "See My hands and My feet; that it is I *Myself*." He showed also the truth of His

Resurrection by giving specimens of human actions. For instance: 1, He ate and drank with His disciples; 2, He showed powers of the senses, saluting those present, and answering their questions, by which He made plain that He could see and hear; 3, He showed intellectual powers, reminding them of things He had formerly said, and reasoning with them out of the Scriptures; 4, Nay, to complete His identity, He gave a specimen of His Divine power, in the miraculous draught of fishes on the Lake of Tiberias. By all these evident signs the disciples recognised their Lord again. It was the same Jesus they had known in the three years of His Ministry. Besides the marks on His person He had also the same speech, the same accent of voice, the same thoughts and ways of reasoning, the same Divine powers. It was truly Himself. He was dead and had again become alive.

3. But what was the nature of our Lord's risen Body? Of what kind was that life which He had now taken? Was His restoration to life merely like that of Lazarus and others, that is, a re-entering on a mortal life—a life again to be laid down? Or was His new life a life that should now have no end? The glory of His Resurrection Body answered this question. This glory He showed when He entered into the midst of them, *the doors being shut*. Another property of the same glory—

the becoming visible or invisible at pleasure— He showed to them when He of a sudden vanished out of their sight. It was to fix on their minds His removal from earthly citizenship, that, during the forty days of His Risen Life He visited them so seldom. He might have kept company with them all the time. We should have expected this almost of Him. But to have done so would have blinded their minds to the real nature of His new life, and of the mystery of the Resurrection. It would have shrouded the truth, and veiled it from sight. It would have just done what He wanted to avoid. He wished to give them proofs that He was really risen with the same Body, but that the glory of that Body was now different; that, in fact, He was now living for ever and ever, and that death had no more dominion over Him.—The climax of these proofs was reached when He was taken up from them into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

4. We read of Angels, who appeared in bodies like men; walking, eating, and drinking like men. Yet the bodies with which they did these things were never animated. They were merely instruments, by which to converse more conveniently with man. But our Lord's Body was His own real Body. He could say, as they could not: "See My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself." But when our Lord ate, it was not as needing food. He ate to show His

power so to do, but not from necessity. So He walked with His disciples to Emmaus, but could equally in a moment transport Himself from one place to another.

5. Our Lord chose as witnesses to the truth of His Resurrection His apostles and disciples. None could so well bear testimony to His identity as those who intimately knew Him. Others might not have been sure that it was Himself. They might only have been assured of a great likeness to Him. The Apostles could not mistake. In some respects it might have seemed more suitable that our Lord's Resurrection should be as public as His Crucifixion, and that a brilliant victory should be displayed over His enemies, by, for instance, His appearing openly in the temple preaching, as in 'old time. But a confusion of uncertain witnesses would have been the result. And our Lord chose a more surely grounded authentic testimony.

Our Lord's disciples were not witnesses pre-disposed to believe His Resurrection. On the contrary, it was extremely hard to convince them of it. He had to upbraid the eleven with their unbelief, because nothing but the testimony of their own senses would satisfy them. Thomas would not believe unless he should palpably touch the Sacred Wounds. The like difficulty of conviction is mentioned of the rest of the witnesses. These witnesses were not merely the twelve; S. Paul speaks of five hun-

dred, whose testimony he appeals to, saying, thirty years after the event, that a great part were still alive.

6. Nothing but the surest certainty of the Resurrection of their Lord could ever have changed those shrinking timorous men into bold and dauntless Apostles. The supposition, that they were either deceivers or deceived, is contrary to common sense. It is a credulity worthy only of the most senseless of infidel bigots. For what fate could these disciples expect, ignorant and incapable men, when their Master, with His sweet majesty, His gracious eloquence and miraculous powers, had yet been gibbeted on the Cross? Supposing even they escaped death, what advantage had they to gain? For, as S. Paul well says: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." No! the truth of the Resurrection, certified by the most undoubted guarantees, can alone account for the conduct of the Apostles and first disciples. The sight of their risen Lord, in the various Resurrection scenes, wrought an impression which made them bolder than lions, firmer than adamant. Nothing could blot it out. No time could enfeeble its vivid stamp. It opened to their eyes a world beyond the grave, where, with Him, they should one day dwell in the delicious transports of an undying love. If only they might gain that further shore, what

to them was the scourge, or the fire, or the sword. They heard His voice crying to them, and that was enough: "Fear not; I am alive, and was dead; and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell."

Let us also, in the distance, catch the echoes, gracious Lord, of Thy encouraging voice. Let us, at least with the eyes of faith, behold something of the glory of Thy Risen splendours; that, for love of Thee despising all else but Thee, we may, when life is ended, be admitted to the blissfulness of Thy presence.

CHAPTER II.

Resurrection.

THE resurrection of the body is a thing of faith. In the things of nature there is nothing that bears to it any full resemblance. The resurrection, like other mysteries of faith, has its figures in the world of nature and reason; but these figures are ever imperfect in one point or other. This is a necessity. The things of faith belong to a higher region. Could they be wholly comprehended by reason, they would sink from their elevated sphere into the order of nature. They would lose their character of mystery. These mysteries are partly seen through their figures, but are partly hidden, because beyond and above what nature can reach to.

By the term *resurrection* is signified, not a mere resuscitation to a mortal life, but something far more excellent. When Lazarus rose from the dead, or the widow's son at Naim, or the dead man whose bones were touched by the body of Eliseus, it was with them a mere re-taking of a mortal life; but the life of the body of the resurrection will be one it can never again lose,—the body, like the soul, will enter on an eternal existence.

Besides its life being of an everlasting duration, the body will also be changed in its qualities. These qualities are called *agility*, *subtilty*, and *clarity*. By *agility* it will move swift as thought from place to place; by *subtilty* it will penetrate other substances without let or hindrance; and by *clarity* it will be transfigured so as to shine brighter than the sun.

Even in this life saintly persons do sometimes, by a mystic transformation, enter in a measure upon the privileges of the Blessed. Their bodies shed forth heavenly light, like the faces of Moses and Stephen. Or, passing with the rapidity of thought from place to place, they seem to be in spots far distant from each other at the same time. Or again, the body loses its specific gravity, becomes lighter than the air, and is raised up above the ground, and can be blown about like a feather by the bystanders, as was the case with the extatic Maria Moërl, and Sister Mary D'Agreda.

Such occurrences as these are termed miraculous. But it must not be supposed that they are arbitrary interferences of God, upsetting the natural order of things. They must rather be considered as occasional manifestations of certain occult, higher, and supernatural laws, which are at present so seldom brought before our notice, that they are almost hidden from our view. Those phenomena, which with us, in the corruptible body, are but imperfectly

developed, and of rare occurrence, will, in the resurrection world, be the normal state of things for all its citizens. Those privileges dealt out in scanty dole to certain Saints on the earth, will become then, in the fulness of their climax, the happy lot of all the Blessed. For the body shall be wholly delivered from the slavery of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

We have in nature certain figures of the resurrection, in the return of light after darkness, in the return of the spring of the year after winter. How all things, seemingly dead, then come back to life, the trees, the plants, the dormant insects. A week or two of the soft breathing of a warm sunshiny air, and what a wondrous transfiguration has taken place. The earth seems no longer the same earth. The black branches of the trees of the wood have burst into masses of foliage, with glad bright green of ever-varying tint. The underground, and fields, and hedge-rows, vie with each other in pushing forth their flowers, rifled by the bee, the butterfly, and myriads of lately tranced insects, which fill the air with their winged hosts. This is the resurrection of nature.

An image of the higher life in store for men is to be found in those marvellous transformations which certain creatures go through till they reach their fully developed form. The frog,

with the same identical life, passes through a remarkable series of gradual reconstructions. When hatched first, it is a simple oblong body. In the tadpole stage, a tail, gills, and a pair of rudimentary legs are added. Then the gills give place to lungs, the tail remaining. Last of all the tail disappears, and the frog is complete.

One of the most striking figures of the glory of the resurrection is to be found in the metamorphosis of the chrysalis into the butterfly. The change is so amazing and transcendent. But the like transformations are undergone by other insects, such as gnats and dragon-flies. Mr. Cox gives the following incident in his *Types of the Resurrection*: "Some years ago I kept a marine aquarium. As I stood looking at it one hot summer's day, I saw on the surface of the water a tiny creature, half fish, half snake, not an inch long, writhing in mortal agony. With convulsive efforts it bent head to tail, now on this side, now on that; springing its circles with a force simply wonderful in so small a creature. I was stretching out my hand to remove it, lest it should sink and die, and pollute the clear waters: when, lo! in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, its skin split from end to end, and there sprang out a delicate fly, with slender black legs, and pale lavender wings. Balancing itself for an instant on its discarded skin, it preened its gossamer wings, and then flew out of an open

window. The impression of this incident was deep and overpowering, but afterwards I saw the marvel again and again repeated."

Gnats pass the earlier stages of their existence in water. When ready to emerge in the form of the perfect insect, they rise to the top, and float on the surface of the water; the skin of the back cracks and opens, leaving the insect in its perfect form, floating within it as in a little boat, from which it quickly flies away. The painted dragon-fly also comes forth from the skin of an aquatic younger stage. These do not, however, float, but climb up upon the twigs of some plant, or other thing projecting out of the water, and afterwards make their way out of the skin.

As these insects have two distinct lives, one of humiliation the other of glory, so is it with man. The epoch of his glorious life begins at the resurrection. Then the body, reconstructed, will be raised into higher conditions, and endowed with loftier powers, suitable to the new life on which it enters. It will no longer be a clog to his nobler aspirations, but will lend itself pliantly as a supple instrument to the mind, and soul, and spirit.

The body of the resurrection will be plastic, easily transformed to any shape the soul wills; just as our Lord appeared as a stranger to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, and as the gardener to Mary Magdalen. And just as our

Lord sometimes appears as a Babe, sometimes as a young Child, sometimes as Crucified, so probably it will be with us, so that with our resurrection body we shall be able to represent ourselves in every stage of our earthly life, having an everlasting possession of every year, of every day, of every hour of our being. Not only will memory be able to go back to each period of our life as a thing of the past, but each period will be rendered present in the eternity of God, and by the plastic nature of the risen body.

Besides this power over the body, there will then be added a like power to that which the Angels now enjoy, of forming out of subtle airy materials all such adjuncts of clothing and scenery as shall give to us and to others a living picture of the events of our life. When Samuel appeared to Saul he came clad in the prophets' mantle, grave and reverend to behold. Moses and Elias at the Transfiguration had their distinctive characteristic symbols, by which they made themselves known at a glance to the Apostles. So in the many visions of the Saints of after days, their appearances vary according to their will, but they carry with them the marks by which they may be recognised even by those who have not known them in life. All these powers will receive a supplementary fulness in the world of the resurrection.

CHAPTER III.

The Body.

OF all the pangs that we suffer in the loss of those we love, perhaps the most cruelly distressing is the fate of their dead bodies. When life is departed we can keep them with us no long time. Strangers come and bear them away, and we follow only to see them laid deep down in the grave. There we must leave them to return home. It is then that the deplorable difference between their condition and ours forces itself before our view. We sit at the fireside and warm ourselves in comfort. And where are they? Lying low in the dark dark grave. We go thither in thought; we place ourselves in their stead in the coffin. The earth is heaped up above us. Oh, how sad, and lonely, and desolate, does not their lot appear! The cold night wind blows rudely and heedlessly over that grave. The snow and comfortless rain soak the earth. What a doom is this to come to!

Are such thoughts as these rebellious? They are not. They are the cry of nature—the cry of religion. We were never meant for this. God never intended that we should rot and

corrupt, and be turned into dust. We ought to have been translated, like Enoch of old, who walked with God, and was seen no more, because God took him: or like Elias, who, in a chariot of fire, went up away from earth. God's mind was that, by an easy transition, the corruptible should put on incorruption, and mortality should be swallowed up of life,—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without pain or travail. It was sin that led to death and corruption, and brought in all this doleful alteration of things.

But He who has condemned can absolve: He who brings down to death can raise up to life. And this He has promised He will do. They that sleep in the dust shall awake. Their garments of corruption shall be changed for a vesture of glory. That body which was sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body, brighter than the sun, and lighter than the air, and more beautiful than anything earth can show. Thus transfigured, and made a meet companion for the soul, it shall, in union with it, enter into the joy of our Lord.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is the unique property of revealed religion. In vain we search for it elsewhere. The heathen never rose to so high a thought. The heathen said *Non omnis moriar*; but *Omnis resurgam* was a profession reserved for the tongue of faith. That the soul does not die has ever been

the belief of mankind, of the philosopher as well as of the savage. The number of those, who have professed not to go with mankind in this matter, is a minority so insignificantly small, as hardly to be worth naming. It was not the undying nature of the soul, but the resurrection of the body, that was the stumbling-block to the learned Athenians, in the preaching of Saint Paul. When they heard it they mocked. Festus the Roman raised his eyebrows with shrewd contempt when he heard this doctrine. He thought it to be the bewildered dream of an overwrought brain. Our modern men of science in this matter merely reproduce the old pagan phase of mind, *i.e.* mind without faith.

The resurrection of the body is a thing doubtless hard to credit. Shall that body which has mouldered to dust, and out of whose dust plants have grown and been incorporated into the bodies of other men, shall that same identical body be restored? Faith answers, Yes. It is not another newly-created body that shall be united to the soul, but each one shall have his own body, identical in substance, though changed in quality. That flesh, and blood, and bones, and sinews, which he had whilst on earth, that same shall he have in the resurrection. When our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He took again His own body, not a new one. That same Body that had hung on the tree, that same Body that had lain

in the grave three days, that very same Body, and no other, did He raise again on Easter morn. Christ's resurrection is the type of ours. But if He rose again with His own Body, and we are not to rise again with our own bodies, then the type would not hold good. His resurrection would be of a different nature from ours, and would be no argument of ours.

It is comparatively easy to believe in the resurrection of a body which has seen no corruption. But when the body has been resolved into dust, and into divers gases, has fertilized the earth, or been eaten by other men, then how are we to believe that the same body will be restored to each one?

This question is not so hard to answer. The body which a man has at his first conception, in what is called the primary cell, is the very same body he has when his frame is full grown. The quantity, more or less, of gross matter, does not affect the sameness of the body. The identity of the body is to be found in the sameness, not of all the gross matter, but of the vital principle. And as first from the primary cell this vital principle built up the whole frame, so in the resurrection it may easily reorganize its ancient dust, or reconstruct its material frame, partly from other dust, the identity of the body requiring a very small quantity of the same essential matter.

There are some men of science who maintain

that the whole of the gross matter of the body undergoes a gradual entire change. Yet they still maintain that it is the same body under all its various mutations. This is a fact of consciousness. It is the same body *substantially*, notwithstanding the *accidental* changes undergone by the various atoms of which it is composed. There is something which underlies the phenomena, which, amidst these changes, remains firm; so that from this point of view the resurrection is possible, though few particles of the matter of the body be restored, since the gross matter is changeable in the living body without loss of its identity.

A truer view, however, maintained by other scientific men, denies that the whole body of man is subject to this flux. The essential part of the body, they maintain, ever remains unchanged in what are termed its *cellular tissues*. But this essential part is very small compared with the gross mass of accidental matter. To preserve for each man what is essential for the identity of his body, does not require any very great stretch of power. Ignorance of the nature of the body, and of the nature of the primary atoms of matter, supposes difficulties where they do not exist.

The bodies of the resurrection will then be the same bodies we have had while on earth, not a new creation. The body that has sinned, that same body will be punished. The body

that has suffered for Christ, that same body will be glorified. Those Martyrs in the Roman arena of old, what tortures they endured for Christ's sake! For the spectacles of Nero, the bodies of Christians, slowly consuming in flame, served as torches to light the streets at night. It is but meet and just that these same bodies should be recompensed with overflowing torrents of consoling delights. And the body that has sacrificed itself by willing pain in the more obscure privations of works of mercy,—watching by the sick, hard labour, long journeyings, fasting and disciplines, shall surely for every item of sacrifice, receive its fitting reward.

If in heaven we had not our own proper bodies we should not recognize ourselves or others. We should have lost the marks of our identity. We should look about to find ourselves, having parted from an essential portion of our being. Not so, however. The whole man shall be restored, body as well as soul. This grand thing God will work, with Whom nothing is impossible. He has promised it, and we believe it. Though worms consume this our body, though it be vapourised into gas, or has fertilised the ground; yet in this same flesh we shall see our God, our own eyes shall behold Him and not another's. This hope is laid up in our bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

Personal Identity.

IN the resurrection to eternal life each one's personal identity will be preserved. We have two lives; one in time, the other in eternity: but they are not disconnected. The latter life is dependent on the former, and is a sort of continuation of it, in a freer, more exalted condition. One of the things our Blessed Lord insisted on when He rose again was His personal identity; that He was the same Jesus His disciples had known so well, "See," He said, "that it is I Myself." For this too He reminded them of things He had said in His mortal life, and showed Himself in familiar characteristic ways. On this same personal identity at the resurrection Job also lays great stress, saying: "In my flesh I shall see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

The link that binds the two lives together is memory. It is memory that assures us of our own identity, tying the past and the present into one. But here some raise an objection, for they say: "If the Blessed in heaven remember their actions on the earth, then they

remember their sins. Then they must sorrow for their sins, and so unhappiness will enter heaven." It will not be so, however; for in the light of God the Blessed will perceive that the sins God has permitted them to fall into have worked for their good; nay, that perhaps by repentance for these sins, they have reached a higher state in heaven than they would have done, if they had never fallen. For what was it that spurred on S. Paul to labour more than all the rest of the Apostles, but the thought that he had once been a persecutor and a blasphemer. Sin was the root of his sanctity. For out of the foul root of sin can God make the most fair flower of sanctity to bloom; and this has been the case with many of the Saints, as was explained to Mother Julian of Norwich, in her *Revelations of Divine Love*, (chap. xxxviii.) so that she says: "God showed that sin shall be no shame, but worship, to man." For in holy Church now we honour Saints that have sinned deeply, such as S. Peter, S. Mary of Egypt, S. Augustine, S. Margaret of Cortona. Their having sinned does not lessen their esteem. S. Mary Magdalen, out of whom were cast seven devils, is, in the Litany of the Saints, placed above all the holiest women, the Mother of God alone excepted. For these elect souls, in their zeal of penance, not only washed off from their hands the great defiling blot, but with it every lesser stain, making

their hands to shine white and marvellously clean, as our Lord once revealed to S. Gertrude. Thus that which the Church says of Adam's sin, "*O felix culpa*—O happy fault!" is in a manner true also of the sins of many of the elect. O happy fault! for though sin is always an evil in itself, and never an efficient cause of good; yet in God's economy of grace, who sometimes makes evil the occasion of greater good, if it had not been for these permitted falls, they never would have reached that height of glory to which they came, perhaps never have entered heaven's gate at all.

2. Saint Augustine thinks that in the resurrection there will be no infants or old men, but that all will rise at the age of thirty-three. Silviuș, however, observes that this is only a matter of opinion, and not part of the Church's faith. This opinion is held partly because our Lord was crucified when thirty-three, and partly because everything in heaven will be perfect. The feebleness of infancy and the decrepitude of age have on this earth an imperfection, because of the corruptible nature of the body. But where the body is spiritual and incorruptible infancy will have no feebleness, nor age decrepitude. These ages would merely show perfections of different kinds of beauty, like the varied grace of a rose in bud, or a rose full blown.

Besides, in some countries, where human life

is short, even at the age of thirty-three people look old, and their youthful grace is quite gone : whereas, before the deluge, when life was longer, and they did not marry till they were over a hundred, it is probable that at thirty-three they were not grown up.

It is thought no wrong to the perfection of Angels to paint them as young children. Dante speaks of one coming to him who was like a boy of fifteen years. The Holy Innocents are represented by the Church, in the hymn of their festival, as playing like children with their crowns. S. Perpetua saw her young brother Dynocrates, when released from purgatory, as a young boy playing with a joyous look. On the other hand, the Ancient of Days, of venerable age, is thought no unfit symbol of the Eternal Father. Age has its glory as well as its defects. Its defects will perish, but its glory will remain in the resurrection, and all will substantially have the age to which they have attained in this earthly life, so as to keep the fulness of their merits and of their identity.

Another thing that affects our identity is our character and attainments. Our character is the natural self we brought into the world ; our attainments are what we have made ourself by our own labour. Our virtue is partly natural, partly acquired. Some persons have natural good dispositions, good intelligence, etc. They

have what the French call a "*bon naturel*." Others are far less gifted with virtue, but by their own efforts with grace they acquire it. Now it stands to reason that the joy and satisfaction of this possession acquired with such effort is very different from that of the natural endowment. The same may be said of acquired intellectual capacities.

But whatever we are, that shall we be substantially in the next world. We shall take with us all we are, and all we have acquired in virtue and intelligence. There are, however, two grades of virtue; one acquired by action, the other given to contemplation. Humility, for instance, may be got by humiliations, or it may be infused by God through a most clear internal light, by which, in an unmistakeable manner, the soul sees her own utter misery, and so has the lowest opinion of her own deserts. This grace is the most excellent. In the intelligence also there is a great difference between the wisdom of an illuminated devout man, and the knowledge of a scholar. Far more noble is that learning which flows from above and from the divine influence, than that which with labour is acquired by the industry of man.

Pious men of science sometimes express a hope that in the world to come they may have unravelled to them the mysteries of geology, astronomy, or other secrets of nature. Doubtless this will be the case. They will have their

fill of knowledge. Their enlarged capacities will scan and scrutinise all the questions they now have no answer for. But God reveals these secrets by an instilled knowledge sometimes to His Saints without study. Saint Hildegarde has anticipated many discoveries of modern science, getting her knowledge direct from God. Such will be the knowledge of nature granted to the Blessed who have never studied. Mother Julian of Norwich could not read, yet she enters deeply into metaphysical questions, taught by a divine light. S. Bernard solved the hardest theological problems, not through school learning, but by a wisdom the gift of God. The most ignorant who are wholly united to God will thus surpass the scholar. Both will be content, but the kind of wisdom will differ, each having that for which he was made capable in this world. Each will be himself.

CHAPTER V.

Supernatural beauty.

“**W**HEN Christ, our Lord,” says S. Thomas, “rose from the dead, He did not change the appearance of His countenance. He only added to it the glory of immortality. With us it will be the same.” He adds: “when we rise again the divine power will so treat with our bodily nature as to take away certain accidental qualities; whilst others, which are substantial, shall remain: to wit, our appearance, without its disfigurements; motion without weariness; the power of eating without its necessity.” (Sum. III., 54.)

Defects of mind or body, are not essential to our identity. They are but part of the corruption of this mortality, which shall then be swallowed up of life. When our Lord on earth restored the limbs of the paralytic, or made straight the frame that was bowed down, or gave sight to the eye which had never looked on the light, He did not, by these miraculous benefits, change the identity of those upon whom He bestowed them; He did but give to their bodily nature the integrity that was its due. So much more will our Lord in heaven

free from all vicious defect the bodies of the Blessed, making each in its measure perfect in beauty, yet their personality will remain unaffected.

Defects of character also sully a man's beauty, appearing like a stain in his gestures, and on his countenance. For the inward man shows itself on the outward. It is for this reason, that, when a great sinner is converted, the change is quite transparent in his every movement, in his face, in the altered accents of his voice. The degraded, brutish, earthy look is gone. He has put on the new man. He has clothed himself with Christ. He is transfigured. However, even the just, whilst on earth, are tarnished with the rust of corruption. But in heaven they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Their beauty will then show in the fulness of its lustre,—the mirror without a spot, the sun without a cloud.

The desire to be of comely form is inborn in a man's nature. Instances are not wanting of men, who, on account of some notable defect, have not been able to bear the company of their fellows, as unable to pass muster, and so best away—best alone. Sir Walter Scott quotes an example in his preface to the "Black Dwarf." The poet, Lord Byron, is another well-known case. The thought of being deformed seems so hard to a sensitive mind. The desire of personal beauty, implanted by God, will receive its

legitimate satisfaction in the kingdom of His love in the glory of heaven.

Beauty, according to the definition of S. Denys (*De Divinis Nominibus*), consists of "proportion" and "light." The beauty of a person's features is the beauty of "proportion," which includes regularity and harmony. The colour of the eyes, the complexion, the hair, &c., these are all the beauty of "light;" for all colour is "light" in various modifications. The brilliant plumage of birds, the graceful tints of flowers, the dyes and sparkling of gems, are all different modes of light. In heaven all the Blessed will have a natural beauty, as Adam had in paradise. For as a painter makes a pleasing likeness, softening down what is harsh and rugged in a man's appearance, yet preserving a true resemblance, so Almighty God will know how to bring each to the perfection of which he is capable, expunging the blots without destroying the substance, like fire freed from the ashes,—like a flame purified from the smoke.

Our Lord is the pattern of all beauty, both natural and supernatural. For when Isaias says: "There is no beauty or comeliness: and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him;" this he says of the disfigurements of His Passion, not of His lack of personal beauty. Our Lord was, as the Psalmist says, "beautiful above the sons

of men." In natural beauty He excelled all men that ever have been or will be. But, by "beautiful above the sons of men," is meant more than that our Lord had more beauty of form than other men. It means that His beauty was more than human, that He had, as S. Jerome says, on His Face a beauty all divine, "the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It is of this supernatural beauty that the Psalmist speaks, when he continues: "With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out; proceed prosperously and reign; *because of truth, meekness, and justice.*" It is with His beauty that our Lord goes forth conquering, and to conquer,—the beauty of His "truth, meekness, and justice." With these He has overcome the world, reigning from the Tree, and drawing all things to Himself by this enthralling charm. And that attraction which our Lord exercised when on earth will be continued in heaven according to the promise made to the just man by Isaias: "His eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall see the land far off."

Our Lord is, as the Canticles say of Him, "all lovely." His graces, however, and His beauty, He does not wish to keep to Himself alone. He desires to share them with others, and to be the Chief amongst many brethren, transforming them into His own beautiful image, "from glory to glory," as the Apostle

says. This transformation is but very imperfectly completed in this life. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert we read of one, who, thinking he had now reached some excellence, desired to see himself in a vision as he appeared in the eyes of God. Almighty God showed him himself, under the appearance of a leper, covered with most filthy sores and corruption. The sight was so hideous that the holy man prayed that the vision might be withdrawn.

In heaven, although the perfection of each will be limited, there will be no defect in any. Our Lord will there surround Himself with forms of beauty in multitudinous variety, each having its own special characteristics. It will not be an indefinite beauty, colourless, so to speak, which will be seen in them, but an individual stamp will mark each one. Of each it may be said: "*Non est inventus similis illi.*" "None is found like Him." Each beautiful form will differ in some respects from all others. And this variety will give greater contentment to the Blessed: just as in a garden we are pleased with various scents, and various colours, and various shapes of the different flowers. The scent of the orange blossom is exquisite, and the scent of the jessamine is exquisite,—but quite distinct. One might suffice for us, but to have both is more delightful. The beauty of the rose might suffice without that of the lily, but to have both gives more fulness of joy.

And in heaven, says the *Responsory*, “*Nec rosæ nec lilia desunt.*” But in the garden of Paradise the plants and flowers are the children of the human race.

Now in the beauty of heaven the “proportion” is humility, which curbs the swellings of pride, and keeps all to its due measure. The “light,” above all else, is the lustre of chastity, as it is written: “How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory:” and by *glory* is signified a most luminous supernatural clarity. Or again, higher; the “light” is the gift of wisdom, the living Light from above; and the “proportion” is the tempering of holy fear.

The raiment of the Blessed is their faith, hope, and charity, with their good works. These are the fine linen, glittering and white, which is the justice of Saints. The fruits of the Holy Ghost are the jewels which adorn their persons. S. Gertrude’s Revelations often describe the Saints, as appearing to her, clad in the most glorious apparel of various colours, symbolizing their virtues and graces. This apparel will add to their beauty, and fill them with greater gladness. They will sing, in the words of Isaias, “I will rejoice exceedingly in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God. For He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and with the robe of justice He hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels.”

Such will be the beauty of the Blessed, their bodies transparent as the light, and their every movement full of exquisite grace. And the body, through its incorruptibility, will breathe forth the most delicious odour, just as a flower sends forth its fragrance. Everything will conspire to render them glorious, and to make them attractive and agreeable in the society of each other.

CHAPTER VI.

The Many Mansions.

HOW multitudinous will be the diversity of the Saints in heaven! Of a thousand blossoms on the same plant there is not one that in all points resembles another. Of ten thousand leaves of the same tree there are no two alike. There is a oneness of form, with variety of expression. It is said that of the millions of the angelic spirits there is not one but has a distinct beauty of his own, by which he is distinguished from all others. So the Saints of God, gathered out of the human race, will be clothed each one with a glory that is different from that of every other, his own peculiar possession. Each will have a name that no man knoweth, but he that hath received it.

In our substantial character we shall be in heaven what we were on earth. We shall take delight in the same things. Identity of person implies sameness of tastes and dispositions. Heaven is a large country. It has a place suitable for every one. It has many mansions. Dante makes ten heavens, which are not indeed supposed to be partitioned off one from another,

but are symbolic of special glories, and a special kind of happiness. Thus there is the heaven of theologians, the heaven of lovers, the heaven of the crusaders, of kings, of contemplative persons, of the Angels, &c. For the happiness of heaven will be like the manna of old, which, "serving every man's will, was turned to what every man liked." It contained all that was delicious, and the sweetness of every taste.

Heaven will be like the feast of Assuerus, where every one ate and drank as he liked, and none did compel. For some joys in heaven are joys to certain of the elect, but above the capacity of others. Heaven would not be heaven, if it forced on our acceptance pleasures unsuited to our character; if what it gave did not satisfy and content us. It is through not considering this that many good persons are to be found, who really dread the thought of heaven. They imagine to themselves a heaven which, though excessively holy, glorious, and splendid, will be (they feel) quite out of keeping with the wants of their own nature. They feel that, unless they are so utterly changed as that they should not again recognize themselves, this heaven would give them no pleasure. They think, however, that it is the orthodox heaven, so they resign themselves to it.

The principal cause of their error is the having wrong, cramped views of the nature

of the Beatific Vision. They imagine that the occupation of eternity will be the sole gazing upon God, the gathering up of all the powers of the soul in one changeless act of adoration. It might seem that, when we see God face to face, it must necessarily follow, that we shall find in Him our sole happiness, be occupied with Him alone, and that all else will be as nothing. Doubtless, if God chose, He could, by His infinite power, so cause it to be, that perfect contentment should be given by the sight of Him, to the exclusion of all else. But God deals with human nature as He finds it. He treats with it as He Himself has made it. Human nature has manifold and varied wants, and heaven—to be heaven naturally—must have what will give satisfaction, not to one want only, but to all these different wants, and that in their multiplied and complex variety.

The greatest want of our nature is the sight of Him to whom we owe our being. In our corruptible flesh no man could see God and live. When Saint John the Divine saw our Lord in the vision of the Apocalypse, His glory was so overwhelming that he says, "I fell at His feet as one dead." But to the Blessed there will be no oppressive glory in the sight of God. For God will both exalt the powers of His creatures to the beholding of Himself, and He will temper His glory to the capacity of each one's ability; so that the vision of God

will refresh and strengthen those who behold, just as created light strengthens and refreshes our sight in this life of corruption.

But as created light not only rejoices the eye in itself, but in all things on which it sheds its ray, and in which it is reflected—for they in these ways get some share of its beauty—so the Godhead gratifies the Blessed, not only by the Beatific Vision, which is the light of God in Himself, but also by all the reflected rays which shine in creatures with a light borrowed from the Divine Essence. Some persons, in speaking of heaven, dwell exclusively on the happiness of the Beatific Vision. They seem to think that no ray of happiness, less than that which comes direct from God, ought to be acceptable in His presence ; just as if one were to esteem the light of a beautiful cloud an incumbrance, and one wanted the light of the sun only, not both.

This mode of thought is a mistake. In the earthly paradise Adam's highest happiness was his communion with God. It was this that gilded with a heavenly ray all the rest of the joys of Eden: the joy of Adam's immense knowledge, by which he knew the nature of all created things; the joys of his senses in the pleasures of that delightful garden; the sweets of Eve's companionship, one like to himself; the exercise of his full power over the animal creation, who all obeyed him as their king,

Communion with God was Adam's highest, but not his only joy. So in the paradise of heaven the Beatific Vision will be the highest but not the sole happiness of the Blessed.

There are to be found on earth, even now, persons who in pleasures that are blameless drink in plenty with thankful hearts, yet would not for the world go beyond, or commit a mortal sin, who, if they think they may have so sinned, are unhappy till again reconciled by a good Confession. This very fact makes it plain that God is to them their principal delight; for out of His grace all pleasure is embittered. But it is equally clear that God is not their only delight. Other pleasures they have, and great ones, in society, in the things of sense, in intellectual pursuits; but all must receive their complement from God's grace and love. Without the light of His smile the soul would be all dark, unsettled, and miserable.

In heaven there will be many kinds of happiness, but the Beatific Vision will be the dominating chord of joy, the other lesser joys being in harmony with it. All will be tinged by God. The vision of God will penetrate and pervade all, as light lends its beauty to objects seen by the eye. But this Beatific Vision will not utterly overwhelm us. Our faculties will not be all absorbed in amazed adoration. God will meet us according to our nature. He has made our wants naturally multiple, and He

will satisfy them by a manifold happiness. Strictly speaking, God alone is enough, for He contains in Himself all those lesser things that make our happiness. But as His wisdom has made us to have manifold wants, He will give them contentment in a manifold manner. He will indulge the nature He has made, filling it after its own fashion.

There are in heaven five springing wells of teeming gladness. The first the Beatific Vision ; 2, Social joy ; 3, Intellectual happiness ; 4, Pleasures of the senses ; 5, the delights of power. All these five fountains, in their completest fulness, are possessed by our Blessed Lord. In Him they reached their utmost plenitude. But the faithful possess them only in measure, according to their proportion of grace. According to their disposition and character, and according also to their sacrifices of these things, for God's sake, while on earth, shall they receive in flowing fulness in the life to come.

How great, O Lord ! is the multitude of Thy sweetness, which Thou hast laid up for them that unfeignedly love Thee. We shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make us to drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure. Thou shalt fill us with the joy of Thy countenance. At Thy Right Hand are delights even to the end.

CHAPTER VII.

The Beatific Vision.

WITHOUT the Beatific Vision there would be no contentment in heaven. That gone, all the rest would be like a shattered mirror. It is the Vision of God, says S. Augustine, for which we were created,—“*videre videntem.*” Only in the fulfilment of that end can we enjoy full satisfaction. “I have not yet fulfilled,” he cries, “the end for which I was created.” It was the desire of the Beatific Vision that made Moses say to God, “Show me Thy Face.” He wished to see, not merely the reflection of God’s glory in a created light, but the very Godhead in Its own essence. The loss of this Vision forms the principal pain of hell.

Whilst we are on earth there are to be had various degrees of the Vision of God. There is the vision of faith, that of infused contemplation, and that by the supernatural light of extasy. Contemplation and extasies give to the soul such views of the grandeur of God that all other excellences fade away and appear as a mere nothing. The wisdom of man, compared with that of God, looks like folly. So Moses,

who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, when he heard the words of God, said, "I beseech Thee, O Lord, I am not eloquent from yesterday and the day before: and since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant, I have more impediment and slowness of speech." Jeremias, having heard the voice of God, cried, "Ah, ah, ah, Lord, I cannot speak, for I am a child." Of Job God had said to his friends: "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." But Job himself, when he had heard the words of God, reproved himself, and said, "I have spoken foolishly, and things above my knowledge, above measure." For Job's speech, as that of a man, was wisdom, but compared with that of God, seemed folly.

Man's greatest purity loses all its lustre, and becomes vile, when compared with the sanctity of God. Esaias, who was so holy, when he had seen the Lord sitting on His throne, broke forth and said: "Woe is me, for I have held my tongue; for I am a man of unclean lips." Lifted up by contemplation to behold the purity of heaven, he discovered and condemned the uncleanness of his lips. Those who are strong champions of virtue, when they behold the immoveable rectitude of God, feel themselves quite feeble. So Daniel, after the vision of God, "languished for many days and was sick." And Abraham, when he had come before God, said: "Shall I speak to my Lord, I that am

but dust and ashes ?” For just as a lamp, when placed in the sunlight looks dull, which in a dark room shone bright; so man’s righteousness, compared with that of God, is unrighteousness.

Those who are destitute of the light of contemplation know little how dark man’s soul has become through Adam’s fault. It is the brightness of this inner light that brings into such unlovely contrast the dusky stains of his corrupted nature. But during this earthly life God never shows Himself to us as He is. It is but a very slender glimpse of His too great glory that our dim eyes are enabled to behold. Yet however much He tempers the light to our blindness, it disturbs by its coming the weakness of our fallen nature. For the smallest touch of His illumination vehemently affects the darkened senses of our souls, and the little He discloses is to us exceedingly great.

But when man has learned his own weakness and vileness, then the light of God cleanses his soul from all defilement, just as the live coal from the altar, touching the lips of Esaias, took away his iniquity. Then, by the vision of God, the soul is lifted up above herself into a higher sphere. The luminous ray penetrates her thoroughly, and kindles within her a furnace of mighty love. She is filled with such an admirable sweetness, that all affection for created things is gone; all movements of the mind are silenced. She gazes only on that glorious, in-

comprehensible light of God, which is seen by her in a wonderful manner, without extension of length or breadth ; and which, while it enters within her, enfolds her also within itself in such a way as to transcend all description.

The prophet David says: "Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation." He does not say that "speaketh," but that "knoweth." For this joy, which the soul then feels, may be known by the mind, but cannot be expressed by the tongue. It so passes the understanding, that he, who knows he feels it, is in a way ignorant of what that is which he feels ; and how should he be able to express it by the tongue ?

It is only, however, by snatches, and, as it were, through certain chinks, that the soul receives, during this corruptible life, the rays of brightness from the fountain of living Light. She finds herself quite insufficient to take hold of its fulness. Even that of which she is capable she cannot keep long. Then she sinks down unwillingly from her height into the lowness of nature. For the immensity of this light throws back the mind that earnestly clings to it, by the too great abundance of its splendour. The soul, unable therefore to comprehend it, cries to God with David: "Thy knowledge is become wonderful above me: it is high ; I cannot attain to it."

Now though by her endeavours the soul cannot reach all she would wish, she does obtain,

in communion with God, a joy that in its delicious sweetness far surpasses all the joys of earth. And if she could hold this as a continual possession, no other happiness would have any value in her eyes. But it slips away from her grasp, whether she will or not; and it is only too at intervals that the visits of God's presence are vouchsafed to her. This makes her to pine with desire for that time when there shall be no longer any alternation of day and night; but the brightness of day shall continually endure, and there shall be no night there.

In heaven the Beatific Vision will not only be to the Blessed an enjoyment of God, without break or interruption; it will also be a far more perfect manifestation of His Presence than the very highest ever vouchsafed to the Saints in this mortal life. It will fulfil those mystical words of Esaias, which say that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." For, in this life, that light which the soul comes to when she transcends all else, is not God Himself; it is but the light in which He dwells. But in heaven the Blessed will see God Himself, that is, the Godhead in its very essence. They will see Him as He is, beholding Him face to face, and knowing Him even as they themselves are known.

When the soul is thus, by the contemplation

of God, so marvellously set on fire, so refreshed, so filled with delight, it makes her think what must be the sweetness of God Himself, and how excessively delightful the light of His very presence, seeing that even the light in which He dwells only, and which is not Himself, is of such unutterable power. This makes her long for this Beatific Vision, to see the Godhead, to see the very Face of God; not its reflection merely, by the mirror of that light in which He dwells. For the Light, which is very God, is incomparably more excellent than that light, in which He dwells. This latter light excites the desires of the elect, but does not fully satiate them; whereas the Light, which is God Himself, both excites and fully satiates. It is so pleasant that It is always unspeakably desired. It is ever given in such fulness that It completely satisfies.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Vision of the Lamb.

CLOSELY associated with the Beatific Vision, and ranking next to it as a source of joy, will be the vision of our Blessed Lord with His Five Wounds. We might have supposed that in heaven the Passion would find no place, its work being now finished. It is not, however, so. The Passion, which is our ladder to heaven, will be there our great object of worship and joy. Adoration and praise will be offered "to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever." Over and over again are God and the Lamb thus associated together in the Apocalypse. For the heavenly city is enlightened by the glory of God, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. By the *Lamb* is meant our Lord as victim, with His Five Wounds.

1. There are several reasons why our Lord rose again with His Five Wounds, and took them up with Him into heaven. He might have put them away had He so willed, and restored His Body to its full integrity, but He did not so choose. He wants these Wounds in heaven, to show to the Father how complete His obedience has been, how perfect the sacri-

fice He has offered for the sins of men. Heaven is given only on account of these Wounds. It is but fitting, therefore, that they should remain for ever. Each of these Wounds has a tongue, which cries aloud in the ears of God, and that cry is, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." Our Lord pleads for men now by His Wounds. He has only to point to His Wounds, and at once He obtains all that He asks. He has become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and how can the Father say "Nay" to such a Son? "This is My Beloved Son," He cries, "in whom I am well pleased." So for all eternity our Lord will wear His Five Wounds, tokens of that sacrifice of infinite value, by which He has purchased heaven for men.

2. Our Lord also keeps His Wounds as a comfort and joy to Himself. They are the enduring guarantees of the greatness of His love towards us. Love is not content with an inward consciousness of its own sincerity. It likes to have some external token of the lengths to which it can go. It craves earnestly for some mode by which it may, in a manifest, palpable embodiment, see the vehemency of its passion. When one greatly loved is sick, we are glad to lose our rest and sleep in attending to the every want of the object of our love. We are glad to do what nature shrinks

from and hates with abhorrence. The most distasteful things become a joy unutterable through love. It slakes our inward thirst, and our hearts thrill with joy to have the opportunity of sacrifice. And when we look on the outward tokens of the infatuation of our love, we are filled with delight. Our Lord has the same feelings of human nature that we have ourselves. He looks at His Wounds, and says: "Behold, I have graven thee in My hands." (Isa. xlix. 16.) Our names are there written, deeply cut with an iron pen. There is written in unmistakeable characters that His love for us has not been merely a love of sentiment, a love of word and of tongue; but a love in deed and in truth, a love without bounds, amazing in length, and breadth, and height, and depth, that pushed Him to the shedding of His last drop of Blood on the shameful tree, a love unmeasurable and infinite. His Wounds are the guarantees of all this, and He would not like to be deprived of such clear tokens.

3. Our Lord also retains His wounds for the greater confusion of His enemies and false friends at the judgment. Then "they shall look on Him whom they pierced." Yes, "every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. They shall see Him in His majesty; and they shall quake and tremble at His presence, beholding Him whom they wounded, coming in power and great glory.

Then will they say to the mountains, 'Fall on us;' and to the hills, 'Cover us; hide us from the Face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'" The Lamb, their victim, whose innocent Blood they shed, the object of their hatred and their scorn, is now enthroned in might and majesty. What can those expect who have so treated Him? He will wear still the marks of their cruelty towards Him, testifying against them. In these indelible signs they will read the sentence of their condemnation. His false friends, who kissed Him with the kiss of Judas; who drew nigh to Him with their lips, when their hearts were far from Him; who, amidst protestations of loyal love, sinned deeply, and unrepentingly; who with sly craft wounded Him, and hid themselves; these likewise shall find their specious shelter of no avail in that day. They will have to stand forth naked in the intolerable light of His Presence. In shame and bitter confusion they will be forced to regard those Wounds, which they have inflicted. To their eternal disgrace He will always wear these Wounds, the Wounds with which He was wounded in the house of them that loved Him.

4. But His true friends will have great gladness in the sight of those Sacred Wounds. How Thomas will rejoice, thinking of the time when our Lord was so gracious to him in his

unbelief, as to allow him to put his finger into the prints of the nails, and to thrust his hand into His side. How Magdalen will rejoice, who after His Resurrection kissed those Wounded Feet, and let fall on them tears, not now of sorrow but of joy, of joy and love in a mingled stream. How the Saints will rejoice, who found in those Wounds, when on earth, all their consolation in trial and distress. Saint Gertrude one day drew the hard nails from the wounds in her crucifix, and replaced them with sweet cloves; our Lord was greatly pleased at her devotion. S. Francis, on the holy mount, during Lent, received the vision of a cherub, holding a crucifix. And from Hands, and Feet, and Side, came rays of light, which pierced the hands and feet and side of Saint Francis with wounds full of anguished but delicious pain. To the day of his death he bore in his flesh the marks of the dying of the Lord Jesus. But he was crucified inwardly before the marks appeared without. The crucifixion of the spirit was showed in the body. Louisa Lateau at this day is a living picture of our Lord's crucifixion, the blood streaming from hands, and feet, and side, from wounds formed by the unseen Hand of God. So in every age the Saints have dwelt in those Wounds, and it will be the same in heaven. The Lamb will be the lamp that gives light to

the holy city, that is, our Crucified Lord, with His Wounds shining like suns.

Our Lord in heaven, with His Wounds, marks of His identity, will be the centre of many brethren, the light and joy of all; His marks of shame now tokens of His glory. His Wounds are no disfigurement to Him. But, as the scars of a soldier are honoured by his fellow-citizens, and are his own glory, so is it with the Wounds of our Blessed Lord. The Saints in heaven will for ever worship those Wounds with adoring love, ravished and entranced, because He has thought them worth such a price.

O holy Jesus, I thank Thee for Thy five Wounds. I should not have known how dearly Thou lovedst me, but for these Wounds. I am sorry for any share I had in inflicting them upon Thee, and I hope to be of that number that shall adore them in heaven for ever.

CHAPTER IX.

The Intellect and Senses.

MAN in his single personality exercises a threefold life. He has a supernatural life above himself in God; he has a rational life in the things of the intelligence; and he has the life of the enjoyment of the bodily senses. Our Lord says of His faithful, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The life our Lord speaks of is the supernatural life. The life of reason He seems rather to depreciate, for He says of His Mysteries, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones." And Saint Paul says that God has rejected the prudence of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Acuteness of intellect, however, is not in itself a hindrance to faith. It is so only because man often is puffed up by it, and becomes self-sufficient. The Gospel does not really depress or narrow man's intellectual powers. It tends

rather to raise them, and to enlarge their force, so that in heaven, together with the Beatific Vision, the reason of man will be filled with knowledge, and will exercise itself in its legitimate sphere.

A craving for knowledge is an essential part of human nature, though but few attain any high excellence in it. To these gifted ones knowledge is their life. The search after it is a devouring passion. Leonardo da Vinci went fasting to his studio as soon as light dawned; he stayed till darkness set in, paying no attention to want of food. The great Newton, to prevent disturbance, had his study door locked, his dinner being placed at the door at a certain hour. One day a friend came and found the dinner there and the door locked. After waiting an hour, he felt hungry, and ate the dinner himself. In another hour Newton opened the door, and after accosting his friend, uncovered the dish, and finding it empty, said: "Oh! I forgot I had eaten my dinner."

God has annexed to the acquisition of knowledge an intense delight, and that delight is proportioned to the magnitude of the discovery made by the intellectual faculties. So when Archimedes had hit on the power of the lever, he was wild with joy, and ran about Syracuse like a madman, crying, "EUREKA!" "I have found it!" This secret of science he had unravelled. When Herschell had calculated that

there ought to be a planet in a certain spot of the heavens, and having directed his telescope to that quarter, at the fixed hour of the night, the bright face of Uranus came, and filled the very place he had assigned for it. Who can conceive the exquisite satisfaction that ravished his heart? A like joy at the discovery of the theory of gravitation repaid Newton for years of intellectual labour, and the great Harvey, when he struck upon the knowledge of the circulation of the blood.

But on earth how little we know. The main secrets of nature are still, with all our advance in science, hidden by an impenetrable veil. That which we call the *attraction* of atoms, which makes them cohere in one mass, we know not the cause of. It is inexplicable. What constitute the phenomena of life we know, but what makes life itself, or how life generates life, we know not. How a carrier pigeon finds her road home through the trackless sky we do not know.

Why in so narrow a region of the tropics there are more than three hundred varieties of humming birds, all seemingly living the same life, serving much the same purpose in nature, we cannot tell. Even many trivial things we are unable to fathom: e.g., why the horns of some cows are long, others short, some crumpled, others straight,—why some serpents have poison fangs, others not; why a dunghill cock

claps his wings before crowing, and a cock pheasant after he has crowed. What, again, are the exact uses of the warts on a horse's leg? and a thousand other things.

On earth intellectual culture is a danger. Men use reason against God, and against reason. Cicero says that the most ridiculous absurdities have had philosophers for their defenders. By being overwise they became fools. For this our Lord says: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out." It is better to have less knowledge and go to heaven, than to have more and go to hell. But in heaven the pleasures of the intellect will be no longer a danger, so that God will fill each with knowledge to the full of his capacity. This plenitude of knowledge in the Blessed is signified to us by the expression, that the four living creatures were "full of eyes within and without." The four living creatures stand for mankind, and the eye is the symbol of knowledge. Then the coveted secrets of nature will be laid bare: what is the quality of every little thing; what is the nature of matter, the number of the stars, and how the various systems of the universe are co-related and interdependent. The natural gifts and aptitudes of scientific men will remain in heaven; but these things will be made known also to others by a different mode of knowledge, and the knowledge of an illuminated man is far higher, says the *Imitation*, than the science of a scholar. In

heaven, without the attainments of study, the Saints will know all things in God.

To intellectual pleasures God will add also the pleasures of the senses, that the body too may have its fill of delight, and the entire man be wholly satisfied. On earth generally the enjoyments of the senses lower and degrade the soul. This, however, is not always the case. Such enjoyments may be blameless, or they may even be made steps to the greater love and glory of God. Thus a certain Saint said once, on smelling a rose: "I thank God, who from all eternity designed to give me pleasure by the smell of this flower." An extreme mortification, that shuts out all that is delightful to the senses, may seem higher, yet practically be lower, leading to less perfection. Each one should in such matters follow his own call, and what God inspires him to. Those who have given up unlawful pleasures for the sake of heaven, will be amply recompensed by God for it; and those who have, by His inspiration, deprived themselves of lawful pleasures, will receive something higher in their stead. Animal wants and desires will not exist in the incorruptible body. When our Lord ate and drank after His Resurrection, He did not do this as wanting food; still He had the power to taste what He ate; but even without any external food, God will fill the sense of taste in the

Blessed with the most delicious savours. All man's senses will be filled with delights.

But some of man's senses are avenues of intellectual pleasures. Their sphere has a range wider and higher than that of the same senses in the rest of God's animal creation. For instance, the scent of a rose has no meaning for a dog, although a dog's sense of smell is keener than that of man. The odour of a flower gives pleasure only to man. The beauty of a flower is not seen by a horse or a sheep. They see the flower, but not its comeliness. The discernment of this belongs to the rational nature. It is the same with the delights of music. The sound of a horn excites horses and dogs. The soft tones of a flute have a soothing charm for serpents. But the intricate harmonies and subtle plots of a piece of music, they cannot appreciate.

In the description of heaven, in the Apocalypse, many things are named which delight the various senses of man; but what is named oftenest is the sweetness of the music. Of all accomplishments the taste for music is the widest spread, the easiest of culture. It appeals to almost all. It embodies and gives an exposition of the feelings of the soul far more potently than any other art, than poetry, or sculpture, or painting. It penetrates the heart with a resistless power, fascinating and subjecting to its charm every affection, leading us after

its own will. The human voice, above all, has this marvellous power, reaching to the inmost shrine of our being, piercing to the core. The sentiments of the singer, all living with emotion, pass by sympathetic chords into the hearts of those who listen. Perhaps sacred music is more powerful than any other. As the voices in choir separate and blend, the meaning of the words receives its most eloquent expression, and the soul is borne upwards in adoration to the regions of religious entrancement.

In some large cities it is the custom for the young children of all the schools to meet in the cathedral on some festival day, there in common to sing some simple hymns, known to all. There is nothing artistic, no attempt at display, yet the effect of these thousands of voices in unison is so entrancingly delicious as almost to ravish the senses away. So unbelievers have, without their will, been borne away into an enraptured enthusiasm, when it has been their lot, at some great assembly of the faithful for the canonization of a Saint, in S. Peter's at Rome, to hear the *Te Deum*, as it rose, sung by a hundred thousand voices. For nothing else on earth bears any resemblance to it. It is like a rehearsal of heaven, like the sound of those hymns which S. John heard in his extatic trance, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of the great thunder.

If the marred senses in this mortal life are sometimes avenues of such overwhelming delight, what will those transports of pleasure be which the renewed senses of the incorruptible body will taste, when God shall steep them with a contentment such as tongue cannot describe, in the glories of heaven ?

CHAPTER X,

Friendships of Heaven.

COMMENTATORS tell us that heaven is likened to a city, because of the multitude of persons assembled together; to a household, because of the intimacy of their friendship; and to a banquet, on account of the immense joy. All the Blessed will love one another; but doubtless those who were tied by affection to each other in this world, will, in the next, have a special attraction to each other's companionship; and this eternal companionship with those whom we love will be one of the brightest joys of the heavenly country.

Even on this earth, which is not the land of love, yet love more than any other power rules the world. The labourer at his toil, what is the thought that sustains him? It is not merely care for self. It is love which animates his work: the love of a wife, a child, a mother, an aged grandsire. This it is which ennobles man's work, and distinguishes it from the toil of the beast of the field. Jacob's hard service with Laban pressed sweetly on him, and seemed light for the love he had to Rachel: the frost by night, and the scorching heat by day, were

all counted as nothing, through the greatness of his love.

Things hardest to nature become sweet through love. To watch night after night at the sick bed of one we love is not a pain, but a pleasure. Love makes it so. Sleeplessness is not pleasurable by nature ; the close, unhealthy atmosphere of a sick room is not naturally agreeable. But love can work strange things. It can make that delightful which we most hate. If a father has rescued his child from a burning house, and has himself suffered severely from the scorching flames, yet the pain he feels is delightful to him, because it is to him an earnest, a token of his great love. He would not, for anything, part with the scars which the burning fire has seared on his arms. Soldiers in battle fight for their country and their homes, their wives and their little ones. This it is which gives them indomitable courage in every danger. Amidst all their distresses, the thought of their loved ones, far away, nerves them to endure.

Who, then, can do without love? To be loved is what we value more than anything else, what we pine and hunger for. Riches, and dignities, and luxuries, will not make us happy without love. But love, without any of these, will fill us with content. Poverty, and pain, and destitution, can be borne with a stout heart

if we have love, for love makes honeyed the most bitter cup.

But is all our love eternal, and are the particular objects of our love always necessary for our happiness? Should we feel a blank without them? In many cases much of our love is only instinct, an animal craving of our nature, which will perish with the body. Alas! what wretched beings we are! We thought we loved some one, and when that person was taken from us, we thought we could never be happy again: life seemed unbearable. We were angry with the sun's bright rays, for its glare was like a mockery of our gloom. With a heart torn and bleeding, like a poor mangled worm, death was to us more desirable than life. But by degrees the blood stanch'd, the wounds healed up. We could smile again; we could enter again half willingly into amusements and rejoicings. We had imagined ourselves utterly inconsolable. We were shocked and somewhat ashamed to discover at length our mistake. New scenes, new interests, new loves, by degrees breathe balm upon our heart. Life becomes tolerable, even happy. Remembrance, passionately cherished at first, fades and slips away, appearing but at intervals on the edge of the horizon, like a picture in a secret drawer, which we still keep, though we seldom see it.

We are not necessary to each other. No one is indispensable to another, even in this life:

how much less in the life to come? But this perishable love is a sort of instinct, implanted by God for useful ends, and dies with the lower animal nature.

There is, however, a love that is eternal: the blameless love of those who, with all their sins and frailties, still look for heaven, and desire to have an everlasting companionship there. Such was the love of Bernard, the brother of S. Francis de Sales, and his wife Mary, daughter of Saint Frances de Chantal. These two, when a war broke out, in which Bernard was one of the king's chief officers, made each a vow to the other, that in case either died before they met again, the other would so live as that they should meet again for eternal companionship in heaven. In a few months they were both of them gone, by unexpected paths, to this rendezvous beyond the grave. Family ties, in all their branches, own God for their Creator, and the sentence, "what God has joined, let no man put asunder," spoken of the ties between man and wife, holds equally true of all family ties. Even when, for God's sake, these ties seem to be broken on earth, it is only that they may be made faster in heaven.

Saint Teresa left her father to become a Nun. She says that the anguish of the separation almost took away her life. But so long as her father survived, she kept up a frequent letter correspondence with him. After his death, she

showed the most tender affection to her other relations. She sends this message to one of her nieces: "Let not Theresetta be afraid of my loving any one else so much as I love her." Saint Teresa's love was only restrained in its full liberty of expression on earth, that in heaven it might overflow the more in perfect abandonment. The tender love of our relations, and the leaving them for God, are in no way incompatible in great souls; but it requires a strong grace to keep the higher path, whilst still treading on the lower.

What can be more beautiful than Saint Bernard's touching outburst of sorrow in one of his sermons on the Canticles, when his brother had died? How sweet the last visit of himself and his brothers to the deathbed of their sister, Saint Humbeline: or again, the passionate grief of S. Francis of Sales, on the death of his mother.

As natural affection remains in the Saints, but purified and exalted, so will it remain in the Blessed in heaven. Saint Paul teaches this in telling us that we are not to be sorrowful for our dead in Christ, as if we never hoped to meet them again, for that God will bring them with Him, and we, together with them, shall be always with the Lord. Yes! one of heaven's greatest delights will be the continual companionship of those whom we have so loved on earth, who were so tied, so knit to us, as to seem

almost a part of ourselves, who understood us, and we understood them, to whom we could pour ourselves out in the most intimate communion of mind and heart. We shall see them again. We shall possess them, and shall be possessed by them. Again that most sweet intercourse shall be renewed, which was to us the sunlight of our earthly life, out of which all was dark. It shall be renewed, not in the scanty measures of earth, in the fitful changefulness of our earthly tabernacle, but now in the full torrent of the eternal river, in the stable security of our home in God. Oh! how delicious will the transports of that gladness be,—a great swelling ocean of joy, a boundless ocean, ever the same, yet ever changing;—ever changing, yet ever the same.

CHAPTER XI.

Social Joy.

MAN was created for society. "It is not good," said God, "for man to be alone." Isolation from his fellows is for man an abnormal state. Some Saints have sought solitude to flee the dangers of worldly companionship, or as a penance for sin. For seventeen long years Saint Mary of Egypt was utterly alone in the desert, bearing the burden of her sin, with no helping hand, no companion spirit. Saint John the Baptist, from his earliest childhood, fled the haunts of men, and lived in the wilderness alone, till he, at thirty years of age, began his ministry.

But the most wonderful solitary was Saint Paul the first hermit. We read of him that when Saint Antony, learning of his existence by revelation, went yet deeper into the desert to seek out his abode, after two days and a night he came up to the place, and discovered the cell by a light burning within. Saint Paul had been then sixty years in the desert alone. But hearing the foot of a fellow mortal approaching, he rose and barred the door of his cell with a stone. Only after long entreaties

did Antony obtain admittance. However, when at last he had been admitted, Paul embraced him most tenderly.

In heaven the pleasure of society will have no danger in it. To none will it be any drawback to the perfection of the love of God. Even on earth the craving for the love and sympathy of our fellows is no imperfection. We might think that such Saints are the highest as are content with God alone; but it is a mistake. Saint Paul the Apostle was a far greater Saint than Paul the hermit. The Apostles are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, in the New Dispensation, next to the Holy Family. Saint Paul was not indifferent to the love and support of others. He shows himself cut to the quick when "no man stood with him;" when Demas had forsaken him, loving this present world; when Luke *only* was with him.

Saint Paul's heart was a large one. It loved God intensely, but had plenty of room also for love to man. When God had spared the life of Epaphroditus, it was mercy to Paul; "lest," he says, "I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Again, when in Troas for the Gospel of Christ, and a door was opened to him in the Lord, yet, he says, "I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but bidding them farewell I came into Macedonia." Saint Paul's Epistles are full of traits which

show how he both gave and courted love. The special salutations, at the end of some of his Epistles, are due to this spirit of love. But in all this he was but a true disciple of the Divine Master. Jesus Christ also poured out His Heart in love, and craved for sympathy. This love it was that caused the bitterness of the pain at the treachery of Judas, which so burdened His Heart at the Last Supper. This craving for sympathy drew from Him the reproach to Peter, "Couldst thou not watch with Me one hour?" and the thankful sentence: "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." The words of the Psalm also are applied to our Lord: "I looked for some one that would grieve with Me; but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort Me."

The ancient Fathers of the Church were men full of the most tender affectionateness. Saint Augustine was so beloved by his people, that when quite tottering with age they would have him supported to the pulpit, that they might see his face, and hear for a few moments the sound of his voice. He, in his turn, so loved that it is said he cried out once, when earnestly entreating them to be good, "I do not desire to be saved without you." The great Saint Chrysostom, who was so fondly loved by his friends, yet reproached some of them with not loving him enough, and complained to

them that their letters to him in his exile were not frequent enough. He was not ashamed to let it be seen how he thirsted after their affection.

In these days there are some people quite too grand to care to be loved by their fellows. They have what they think a holy indifference to all particular affection. They would shut out of heaven particular love, and merge all in a sort of general charity. How differently did Saint Augustine think and feel. Nebridius he calls his "dear Nebridius," "my Nebridius." And when speaking of him as in heaven, "drinking his fill of happiness without end," he adds: "And yet I cannot think he is so inebriated with it as to forget *me*; since Thou, O Lord, the Fountain at which he drinketh, art pleased to be mindful of us."

This stoical apathy is not Christianity. Christ Himself loves intensely particular persons with a peculiar love, not a general charity, and He desires earnestly a return of love. He thirsts for love, nor would it be a higher thing for Him to be lost in God and to care for nothing else. To crave for our love is no imperfection in Him. It is a glory. And what is glorious in Him is a glory also in us. He is our type. He is our model. All God's creatures have something in them worthy of being loved, but some more than others. Our Lord loved some persons more than others. They were objects

of His special attachment. This is insinuated to us when it is said that He loved Martha and her sister Mary;—when the message sent to Him concerning Lazarus was, “He whom Thou lovest is sick;” and when Saint John is called “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

In Religious Houses particular friendships are condemned. But by particular friendships are meant such friendships as injure the common charity. Particular friendship seeks the companionship of some to the exclusion of others;—will do for some what it will not do for others. If we truly love all, and are equally willing to do for all or any the acts to which charity binds us; if we show plentiful, unstinted, generous, kind love to all in all outward acts; then we may be lavish of our hearts’ inmost affections on those whom we feel specially drawn to love. Our Lord’s love of Saint John is an example of special love in a Religious Community. For such a Community was the band of the Apostles. That can never be blameable of which our Lord Himself gave the pattern.

“Le ciel, c’est aimer en paix,” says Madame Swetchine. On earth love has its dangers. It tends downwards. But not so in heaven. In heaven all the Blessed will desire the companionship of their fellows, even those who, for one reason or other, have shunned society whilst on earth. Man is social by nature; and

the glory of heaven does not crush nature, but perfects it, takes away its defects, and exalts it. Human nature will remain in heaven. We shall love our kinsfolk and friends with a particular love. We shall know them from others. As our Lord, after His Resurrection, had, in His impassible flesh, the same dear Face so often gazed on by His disciples with adoring love; so each one of us will be recognizable above by those who have known us on earth. Our Lord's voice had the same tone and accent, His step the same foot-fall; and so with all who shall rise after His model. We shall know and rejoice in the company of each other. These lesser joys in heaven will mingle with the greater, and will not disturb the harmonic tone; for joy in God will be the grand chord with which all the rest will blend in sweetest concert.

CHAPTER XII.

Eternal Love.

SAINT Augustine says there are three kinds of love: unlawful love; natural blameless love; and supernatural love. Unlawful love can have no place in heaven. Even that kind of love which has been implanted in man as an instinct for the preservation of his race, and the consolidation of earthly society, will, as an instinct of the animal nature, die with it, never to be again revived. Ties of country, ties of kindred, unless joined with ties more exalted, will not last for ever. Love, to be eternal, must be grounded on eternal motives. If love be grounded merely on the fleeting comeliness of flesh and blood, it will be even more fickle than that corruptible beauty itself.

Solid natural love has its ground in the appreciation in others of virtues and excellences, which we either feel that we ourselves possess, or which we feel are lacking in us. Families have their characteristic inbred hereditary qualities, which are, as it were, the genuine stamp of the family name. These are the bond by which its members know and are knit to each other. Allowing for all indi-

viduality, there is a sameness of sentiments, ideas, and of heart amongst the members of a family, which makes them at home and at one with each other, far more closely than they can be ordinarily with any one outside the circle. There is, however, in some singular cases, a love betwixt friend and friend exceeding in closeness every bond of kinship. Such was the love of David and Jonathan. The soul of Jonathan was knit with David, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul. David, on his part, loved Jonathan with a love passing the love of women, with an enthralling love, like that of a mother to her only son. God, who is Love, has created in man, after His own likeness, a loving soul. He has done this, not only that we may turn our love to Him, but also that we may love one another with intensest affection. He it is that has made this love the sweetest pleasure we can enjoy on earth, next to His own love, and it is not wonderful that the hope of renewing again above that most delightful companionship is to many the loadstone God uses to draw them to the life of grace.

But the bonds of supernatural affection are far dearer still, because the intimacy they effect between soul and soul is far closer and more delicious than any wrought by other lower love. This affection is not grounded on any attractions of earthly beauty, accomplishments, or talents. It is inspired by those charms, far

more excellent, of heavenly grace; that beauty, not of the body, but of the soul, which, being hidden, still appears. For the gifts of God cannot conceal themselves; they come unbidden to the windows and betray their presence, lighting up the features with a holy ray, lending grace to the movements of the body, the modulations of the voice, and manner of speaking; shedding indeed on the whole outward behaviour their exalting, transfiguring influence.

But, far more than all these outward things, it is the intercommunication of thought and sentiment, intimately penetrating each other, that blend these two souls as it were into one, though each preserves its own individuality; not high intellectual thought, but thought steeped in God's light, and sentiments all aflame with uncreated fire; thoughts inspired by God, and lit up with a heavenly ray; burning thoughts, like hot coals fresh from the furnace, which melt into the soul, making her languish and faint for love.

The union between Saint Monica and Saint Augustine her son was a union of this kind. It was not the ties of kindred principally that bound them to each other—ties of flesh and blood—but the far straiter bonds of heaven's forging. Saint Augustine's joy in his mother was his admiration of her holiness. And when some fresh trait of this beauty came before his view it filled him with a rapture of delight,

because she whom he loved had so wholly left earth, because she was so perfectly unchained, and her whole pleasure was in the things of heaven. We can see this from the things he tells us respecting his mother in the Book of his Confessions. Her joy in him was also that he was not only converted, but that he had despised all earthly happiness, and given himself entirely to our Lord. God and the life of heaven were the subjects on which these two talked with one another as the evening of Monica's life was closing, in those last days of hers, which were passed at Ostia, on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Those conversations of Saint Scholastica and her brother Saint Benedict, at their yearly meetings, were not prompted by, were not the movings of, mere natural affection. That intense craving to sit for more long hours with him, and hear him speak, that caused her to do violence to heaven to obtain her wish, so that what her brother had denied God granted: this never arose from a mere sister's liking to the society of her brother. Her love of her brother was principally a supernatural love. It was the love of God, and of the things of God, in him. These two souls were knit together by sympathies whose roots were in the paradise of God.

Sympathies of this divine character have been the bond between many elect souls,

uniting them by ties of purest, holiest, friendship. And many times this has been between persons of opposite sex, perhaps then only reaching its fullest expansion. Such was the friendship of Saint Jerome, and Saint Paula, and Saint Eustochium; Saint Basil and his sister Saint Macrina; Saint Chrysostom and Saint Olympias; Saint Bernard and Saint Hildegarde;* Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare; Saint Francis of Sales and Saint Jane Frances de Chantal. These blessed souls lent mutual help to each other, fed on each other's graces, and had with each other a sweet interchange of heavenly lights. Their graces and illuminations, although bestowed by God partly on the one, and partly on the other, were not given for each singly, but were for the benefit of both, and were a sort of common fund.

So Agatha, daughter of William the Conqueror, her betrothed husband having died before their marriage took place, her father wished to give her to Alphonso, King of Spain. But she declared that her heart still belonged to her first betrothed, and she should detest giving her hand to any other. William insisted. Then with passionate tears she besought our Lord to take her from this earth rather than ever allow her to be married to Alphonso

* "Je me dépose en votre âme." (*Lettre de S. Hildegarde à S. Bernard.*)

in Spain. She died whilst on the journey, and was buried in the cathedral of Bayeux.

The relationship, formed by God between them on earth, will be eternal. In heaven there will be a continuation, in a more excellent and supernal manner, of this same interchange of lights and heavenly gifts. A gift, an illumination, will no sooner come from God to the one than it will be made over to the other. The flooding of each other's souls with God's lights and gracious gifts will be to them a ravishing joy, a transport of delight, which, though utterly lower than the joy of the Beatific Vision, will yet be one of the most blissful elements of the happiness of the Saints above. And oh, how pure the vehement affection of that clinging love! How chaste in its exquisite deliciousness the union of those Blessed ones, who are thus welded together in God.

I thank Thee, O my God, for the gift of love. O my God, I beseech Thee that all my love may be clean and pure; that those whom I love I may love in Thee and for Thee: that so my love may never perish, but through Thee may endure for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

Conversation of the Blessed.

SAINTE PAUL, writing to the Thessalonians, calls these disciples his hope, his joy, and crown of glory, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. S. Paul here sets forth his longing expectation of meeting again with his disciples in heaven, where they will be his joy and his crown. S. Paul had a large heart: no Christians,—none of the Saints,—were shut out from their share in his love. He loved the converts made by S. Peter, S. James, and the rest of the Apostles. He loved in prospect all Christians in every age, to the end of the world. But he had a special love for those whom he himself had begotten in Christ through the Gospel, for whom he had travailed in birth, till Christ should be formed in them; who had been to him a cause of so much sorrow and so much joy; with whose interests and welfare his inmost heart was so bound up; who had loved him with such passionate affection, weeping, and kissing him, and grieving most of all for the word that he had said,—that they should see his face no more on earth; to whom he bore witness that, if it might be, they would

have plucked out their own eyes and given them him.

Whilst for others S. Paul embraced all with a most cordial charity, it was for these, his friends, he felt the tenderest affection. The thought of meeting again with them in heaven thrilled him with joy, to have them with him for ever,—to part no more.

The bond between disciples and their master is not so sweet as the tie between two that borrow from each other, and that give mutual help each to the other: but this bond will be one of the joys of the Blessed. The great masters of the spiritual life, such as S. Benedict, S. Bernard, S. Dominic, S. Francis, and S. Ignatius, who were so dearly loved by their disciples, will still love and be loved in heaven, will still be fountains of the eternal treasures in His dispensation, who rules all things with order, and, in every way, mediate or immediate, is the Giver of every best and perfect gift.

According to the doctrine of Saint Thomas, the hierarchies of Angels, first in order, are made by God the instruments of illumination to those that are lower. This is God's general rule, for doubtless even the lowest Angels get some of their lights direct from Him. Now what God does in one province of His works, the like He does in others. There is in God's works a reign of law. So it is that on earth men are made the instruments of illumination one to

another; and in heaven above, the same law of God will prevail amongst the Blessed, and the higher ranks, that are nearer the throne, will shed of the lustre of their light on those that are further off. S. Augustine teaches this doctrine, when he says of the Virgin-choir in heaven: "That new canticle of yours the rest of the faithful shall not be able to sing, but to hear it they shall be able, and to rejoice in your so excellent a good." In these words we see that it is not directly from God that the faithful learn the excellent glory of the virginal state, but they get to know it through what they hear sung by the Virgin-choir. The Virgin-choir enlighten them as to that of which they have not the knowledge in themselves.

When, however, it is said that the higher hierarchies enlighten the lower, it may still be that in some things the lower give light to the higher,—the lowest Angel to the Seraph. According to S. Denys, each hierarchy has its own point of excellence, not equally possessed by the others. The Seraphim love most, the Cherubim know most, and so on. The nine hierarchies are the complement of each other, and lend to each other. On earth the very grandest intelligences may receive instruction, in one or other point, from those far less highly gifted. It is thus God binds human society together, not suffering its members to be isolated, but making them interdependent. Just as in the body the hand

cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee ; nor the eye to the hand ; but God has tempered all the members together, making them to require the support and help of each other. It will be so in heaven amongst the Blessed, and that far more than in our defective earthly society. No single unit of that vast company can be spared. The loss of but one would lessen the happiness of all the rest.

But how do these Blessed ones communicate one with another ? They do so after the manner of spirits, as the Angels communicate with God. The words of Angels are spiritual. S. Gregory, on the passage, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and divinity," says : " The voice of Angels, praising God, is their admiration, in inward contemplation. To be struck dumb at the marvels of the Divine Goodness, is to utter a voice. For the motion of the heart, stirred with awe, is, to the ears of the Infinite Spirit, as the utterance of a mighty voice. This voice reveals itself in distinct words by expressing its admiration in modes of countless variety." Also, on the loud cry of the souls under the altar : " How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not revenge our blood ?" The same Saint says : " What is it for souls to utter the prayer for vengeance, but to long for the day of final judgment, and the resurrection of their dead bodies ? Their great cry is their great longing. And when they

receive the answer from God: 'Rest yet a little while, till your brethren be filled up;' to say to these souls: 'Rest yet awhile,' is to breathe on them, amid their burning desires, the soothing of consolation, by an assured foreknowledge of the certainty of retribution, together with the further gladness of the accession of many brethren, to be gathered to them."

It is not principally by articulated speech that the risen Saints will hold converse one with another; but without the noise of words they will be able to reveal in an instant, and, as it were, by a flash of light, those sentiments which they wish to unfold. It is thus the Angels speak to one another. When, for instance, in the Book of Daniel it is said that "one Saint said to another, How long shall be the vision?" &c.; and the other said to him, "Unto evening and morning, two thousand three hundred days;" both the question and answer were spoken after the manner of angelic spirits. The war also between Michael and Lucifer was, according to the great mystic Ruysbroek, a war of intelligences: Michael, with his cry, "Who is like God?" striving to convince and refute the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels. Lucifer, on his part, unable to endure the intolerable light that flashed on him, seeking the outer darkness of the abyss, and so finding no more place in heaven.

The power conversing soul with soul, with-

out uttering a word with the mouth to the outward ear, has been enjoyed by some of the Saints at times even on earth. At the interview of S. Louis with Brother Giles, companion of S. Francis of Assisi, they embraced each other, and not a word passed from one to the other. But in God their intercommunication of sentiments was a long and marvellous conversation. A few minutes contained whole hours. This Brother Giles explained afterwards to one of the Friars, who wondered that no word had been spoken. Articulated words are, after all, but a poor vehicle for the sentiments of the heart. Far more is told us by the gestures of the hands, the glance of the eyes, and the whole play of the countenance. It is these which give life to the words of the lips, vividly manifesting and unveiling the soul. Animals and insects, such as bees and ants, without any noise, do, by certain signals, convey the most distinct intelligence to each other, and influence one another. And if even in those lowest societies of God's creation the binding links are not wanting, how much more clear and perfect, and multitudinous and delicious, will not those intercommunications of knowledge and sentiment be, in that grandest climax of all societies,—the society of heaven !

CHAPTER XIV.

Dignity and Power in Heaven.

WHEN a friendship exists between two persons of very unequal sanctity, the less perfect is sometimes troubled, thinking that, through this inequality, there will be perhaps in heaven almost a complete separation; the one being so high, so near the throne, and the other so far off. Really, however, there is no such thing as distance between any of the Blessed in heaven. We are apt to imagine heaven after a material fashion, as some immense place, thronged with spectators of God's glory, some nearer to Him, some further off. This notion is in some respects a help to realize what heaven is like, but in others it is a hindrance. The image is imperfect, and must not be pushed too far, or it leads to false ideas.

Saint Thomas (Sum. iii. 57,) teaches that the bodies of the Blessed will be of so glorified a nature, that they will be above the ordinary laws of place, and will not require to be contained in a place at all. They may, by the power of God, be in two places at the same time, as has happened to some of the Saints upon earth. Or again they may be in the same

place with another body. It is not improbable that they can move from place to place, without going through any intermediate space, and in an instant. These powers will belong, not to the body, considered in itself; for in itself the body will be of the same nature as before: but they will flow upon it from the soul. By her complete union with God the soul will be endowed with a plenitude of power and blessedness, and of this fulness she will give to the body, according to those higher laws of the kingdom of God, which will then come into normal operation. The action of these laws is at present only seen occasionally, in the miraculous lives of the Saints.

Our Lord is said to have ascended above all heavens. But by this is meant, not that He is gone up to some immensely high point of space, but, as Saint Thomas teaches, that His dignity is above that of all the heavenly hierarchies. In the spiritual world place is attributed to a person in a different mode from what it is in this material world. Between the highest and the lowest there is a great difference of dignity, but not a great distance of space. Our Lord was in majesty very different from the Good Thief on the Cross, yet He says to him, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." And the words "*with Me*" betoken, not merely that the Good Thief should be in the same paradise, but that he should enjoy the honour

and delight of our Lord's friendship, though in dignity so far below Him. The disciples of the Apostle Paul, who were to be his crown and his joy, were some of them very imperfect, far from the height of the sanctity of their master. Such a difference will be no hindrance to the nearness of friendship in heaven.

And when it is said that our Lord is at God's Right Hand, it is not meant that He is in some fixed place, from which He never removes, but only that He is in the highest place of honour, above all creation. Our Blessed Lady is, in the same manner, next to Him. None of the Blessed are in any fixed place, but move hither and thither as they please; but each one has his own fixed dignity. It is a question whether men or the Angels are first in order. Mediæval theology mostly supposes that mankind fill up the lost thrones of those that fell with Lucifer. But the Fathers place men above the Angels, not only in the person of Christ, but also of those who are sharers of His glory, being, in union with Him, partakers of the Divine Nature; so as to be able to follow Him whithersoever He goeth, and to sit on His throne, as He sits on the throne of His Father. For though human nature, in itself, is lower than that of the Angels, yet by the effects of the Incarnation it is lifted up above it; just as copper, though a less precious metal, yet when mingled with much gold,

becomes of more value than silver. Nor is the bodily nature any drawback. Far from it. S. Thomas teaches that in heaven the incorruptible body will be an advantage to the soul, and will add to it a certain perfection, enabling the soul to work better. In this life the corruptible body is a hindrance to the soul; the soul works freer when separated from it. But the glorious body will be an instrument perfectly submissive to the soul, so that her beatitude in union with it will be enhanced, and will be greater than that of a separate soul.

Now, according to each one's worthiness, the Blessed will have bestowed upon them a corresponding degree of power. This doctrine is taught by our Lord in the parable of the pounds, where to him that had gained ten pounds, it was given to have power over ten cities. The same is implied in the reward of the good and faithful servant: "Be thou ruler over many things." The cry of the ancients in the Apocalypse has the words: "and we shall reign on the earth." The life of the Blessed in heaven is like the life of God, a life of rest, yet a life of activity; a life of active rule, with complete freedom from toil. God, who is the Sovereign Ruler of ten thousand worlds, can easily find a sphere of activity suitable to the genius and powers of each of the Blessed.

The Angels are none of them idle, though their multitude exceeds all count. Some are

concerned with the souls of men. Some have under their charge the interests of whole kingdoms. The elements are under the control of others; storms, earthquakes, pestilences, and the like, are brought about through their medium. The Angels war with each other, and enter into vehement contest, yet subside again always into the delicious harmony of the Holy Will of God. When they prevail, they are filled with jubilation; and if they prevail not, they are still content. The tumultuous jostling of their forces is without any rancour or bitterness, like a riotous conflict of sound in a symphony, which often, by the art of the composer, results in a quite unlooked-for finale, filling the ear with exquisite surprise, and steeping the whole soul with pleasure. A thousand different ways offered of turning the melody with various combinations; all would have been good: why the composer chose this particular mode is a riddle. So it is that God rules and tempers the conflicts of His Angels to the working out of His grand and glorious designs.

It will be the same with the activities of men in the Resurrection life. In this life there are but slender opportunities for a man to show himself what he is, or what he can do. He is cramped for want of a sphere. He can but give just a few specimens of his powers. Many a man passes away with his abilities never displayed, never put into action; his wealth all in

his coffers, waiting for a season to come forth, and that season never came,—the bud never opened: like the valiant bravery of a soldier forced to lie inactive in a time of peace.

There are people tied by circumstances to a life for which they feel themselves wholly unsuited; talented spirits to a humdrum drudgery of routine; active spirits tied to inaction; cloistered spirits condemned to mix in the bustle of the world, for whom life has been a disappointment, a sad failure. But in the Resurrection all this will be put to rights. Each one will be in his place, and will feel himself in his true place, having just the lot that fits him. It is a joy to the workman to exercise his bodily strength; for the mechanic to display his skill; for the intellectual man to embody and unfold his thoughts. Each one has a keen delight in exercising his powers, whether of body or mind. In God's vast creation each one will then be provided with the sphere that just suits him. Nothing will be amiss or wasted. All will then be in perfect suitableness.

O happy longed for day of final retribution.
O beautiful adjustment of delectable harmony,
when each one's voice shall put forth its full
powers in the eternal concert of praise, and
each shall find satisfaction to the full.

CHAPTER XV.

Our New Acquaintance.

BESIDES the friends we know, we shall meet also in heaven a multitude of persons whom we have heard or read of, and have learned to admire and reverence, but whose persons we have never seen. S. Augustine says that such we shall know at once by an instantaneous recognition of the qualities revealed to us, which will tell us who and what the person is whom we behold. The Saints had this knowledge not unfrequently on earth. Saint Dominic and Saint Francis thus knew each other at sight; they beheld at once each in the other who it was, without any introduction. So Saint Paul, the first hermit, knew Saint Anthony, when he was discovered by him in the desert. So the three Apostles, at the transfiguration, knew Moses and Elias.

One of our new acquaintances will be our Guardian Angel. He will be at the same time a new friend and an old one. For we have had his continual companionship from the first instant of our being. He it is that has loved us so much during our pilgrimage,—with whom we have held so much intercourse unseen,—who

knows us so thoroughly, having been with us, helping us every step of the road of our earthly trial. What a joy to behold him for the first time! How that joy will increase as our knowledge of his love deepens in the soul, and our knowledge of all that he has done for us. It is through his help that we are where we are. Under God we owe our being in heaven at all to him.

But what a number of persons we shall find in heaven whom we never should have expected to see there; those who, in outward seeming, died far away from the only path of salvation. For, as Saint Augustine says in his *City of God*: "The two cities of the predestinate and the reprobate, are in this world confused together and commixed, until the general judgment make a separation." All in this City of God on earth will not be its citizens in heaven; nor will all who are out of this City on earth, be out of the City of God in heaven. There are some who belong to the body of the Church, but do not belong to its soul; and there are some who belong to the soul of the Church who are not of its body.

In the *Quanto conficiamur*, an Encyclical of Pius IX., the following passage occurs containing this doctrine. "Those," he says, "who are in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, and who, carefully observing the natural law and its precepts, which have been

engraved by God on the hearts of all men ;—and who, being ready to obey God, actually lead a good and upright life, can, by the help of divine light and grace, attain life eternal. For God, who clearly sees, searches, and knows the minds, souls, and habits of all men, does not permit, in His sovereign clemency and goodness, that any should be punished with eternal torments who is not guilty of a voluntary fault.”

The grace accorded to those in invincible ignorance reaches the whole of the human race, all sects of Christians, and even Jews and Pagans. Our Lord revealed to Saint Bridget that He would not condemn such Jews and Pagans as were in good faith, and did their best to serve Him. Those Jews, who were in good faith, He terms *hidden Christians*. The words are these : “Excipio omnes Judeos, qui occulte sunt Christiani, et serviunt mihi sincerâ charitate, et rectâ fide, et opere perfecto in occulto. De te autem, Pagane, excipio omnes qui libenter incesserent per viam mandatorum meorum, si scirent quomodo, et si instruerentur ; qui et opera faciunt, quantum sciunt et possunt,—hi nullatenus vobiscum judicabuntur.” (B. I., ch. 41.) The Revelations of S. Bridget were examined by the Council of Constance, and approved, as containing nothing contrary to faith. This was sanctioned by Martin V. Urban VI. had them again examined, and declared them “free from error, and truly revealed by the spirit of God.”

Some Pagans, with their small light, have given very bright examples of virtue; Alexander and Cyrus of chastity. Phocion, being condemned to death unjustly by the Athenians, was asked if he had any message for his son. "Yes," he said, "tell him to forgive the Athenians my death, and to take no revenge." Suetonius says that the Emperor Titus used to visit and serve the sick soldiers with his own hands. The Emperor Hadrian did the same. Pliny reports the same of the Emperor Trajan. Tiberius, Ausonius, and Gratian did the same. S. Paul says "that Pagans, to whom God's law was not known, but who, attending to the voice of conscience, became a law to themselves, to which they lived faithfully, that these were justified before God." (Rom. ii.)

In the Revelations of Sister Emmerich, published with the approbation of the pious and learned Bishop Sailer, of Ratisbon, and translated for Catholics into every European language, is to be found a still more remarkable teaching of the same doctrine. She says, (chap. 64) "I next saw our Lord, with His triumphant Procession, enter a species of Purgatory, which was filled with those good Pagans, who, having a faint glimmering of the truth, had longed for its fulfilment. This Purgatory was very deep, and contained a few demons, as also some of the idols of the Pagans. I saw the demons obliged to confess the deception they had practised with

regard to their idols; and the souls of the Pagans cast themselves at the feet of Jesus, and adored Him with unutterable joy. Here, likewise, the demons were bound in chains and dragged away."

The remarkable point to be noticed is, that these Pagans were actual idolators; but inasmuch as they had acted in ignorance, and had not sinned against the light, they were not condemned. When S. Paul speaks of the condemnation of those who served the creature rather than the Creator, he speaks of the intelligent, "who, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God," but consented to idolatry and the viciousness of a filthy life.

Such were those sophists, who, making a show of wisdom, became really fools. But the true philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and their disciples, these were hidden Christians. Father Gratry, in his *Connaissance de Dieu*, a book examined and approved at Rome, maintains that S. Paul never intended to condemn these. Socrates and Plato, he shows, had a belief in the need of a Divine Redeemer, and inculcated this belief on their disciples. The same is maintained by Stolberg in his book on the *Love of God*.

Some Christian writers have twitted Socrates with being false to his creed in the unity of the Godhead, because, as his life ebbed away, he told a friend not to forget that he owed the

sacrifice of a cock to *Æsculapius*. But it is evident that this speech is one of sarcastic contempt of the idol god. A sacrifice is offered to *Æsculapius*, the god of health, not on recovery from sickness, but when death was certain. Socrates insinuated, in his humorous vein, that this god brought death rather than life. God thus has His elect hidden amidst the filth of the Pagan world, amongst gainsaying Jews and heretics. And His eyes see far more there than ours. Elias thought he alone was left of those who did not worship Baal, but God told him He had still left in Israel seven thousand men. God will manage to save a large remnant; and, in the words of the Post Communion of Martyrs, our souls will be gladdened by their company in heaven,—“*perpetuo lætemur aspectu.*”

S. Augustine says we ought to despair of no one. We might have thought that those who repented not at the preaching of Noe would be lost, both body and soul; but Scripture expressly assures us to the contrary. Those who are types of the reprobate are not necessarily themselves reprobate. S. Chrysostom thinks that Cain was perhaps saved, others that Esau was. Ananias and Saphira are supposed to have suffered death in the body for the salvation of the soul. The Fathers had much larger views of God's mercies in Christ than many of our moderns. S. Jerome supposes that bad

Christians generally, unless absolute renegades, will escape eternal torments. His words are these: (Is. chap. lxvi.) "Sicut diaboli, et omnium negatorum, atque impiorum qui dixerunt in corde suo non est Deus eterna tormenta: —sic peccatorum, atque impiorum, et tamen Christianorum, quorum opera in igne probanda sunt, atque purganda, moderatam arbitramur et mixtam clementia sententiam judicis." S. Francis of Sales held the same doctrine.* The Church prays with hope even for those who have been bad, if they have died "with the sign of faith." She pleads for her child that "though he has sinned, he has not denied the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Such is the Church's idea of the ample embrace of God's mercy.

What a comfort it is that our Lord will be our Judge, and not our neighbours. Father Lacordaire gives it as his conclusion, in his *Results of Divine Government*, not only that the majority of Christians, but that the great majority of mankind will be saved.

Perhaps some may think the doctrine of Cardinal Sfondrato more probable. According to the doctrine of Cardinal Sfondrato, the mass of Pagans will, after undergoing sensible pains†

* Spirit of S. Francis de Sales, III. 10.

† S. Thomas says, "that *punishment* does not always mean sensible pains, but sometimes the pain of loss only,—and that

for a time, attain, in their measure, to that natural happiness and beatitude which S. Thomas speaks of as the portion of unbaptized infants. It was an opinion general before the time of Peter Lombard; and this doctrine has been revived by later theologians, that the sensible sufferings of the lost are, after a time, lessened and relieved. The damned will, however, never be admitted to the Vision of God. Cardinal Sfondrato's doctrine was examined at Rome, and the Holy See refused to censure it. It may be added that S. Augustine and S. Thomas maintain, that Being, ever in pain, is preferable to non-being. (Sum. I. 53.) It is related in the Vision of S. Brandon, an Irish Abbot, that the Saint saw that some of those who fell with Lucifer, have still great natural joy, their trespass having been but little, and our Lord being merciful.

Our Lord's judgments will be much more gentle than those of men. Men are extreme to mark what is done amiss, but God is not. He knows whereof we are made. He remembers that we are but dust. Our Lord makes allowances; because sometimes, when the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. He has a fellow

fire, too, in Scripture, is frequently the figure of any punishment whatever." (Supplem. to Sum., Ques. LXXI. 5.)

"Nothing is outside the sphere of God's love, and none, not even the damned, can escape it altogether."—*Christian Life and Virtues. Bp. Gay.*

feeling with our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we, though without sin. We could not therefore search out a more lenient Judge than Him. If He can find anything to be alleged in our favour, He will certainly bring it forward. Besides, it is His own interest to get us into heaven, if He can. He receives much more glory by our salvation than by our damnation. Then, again, His love for us is so great that He shed His Blood for us: so that we have for our Judge one who loves us intensely, who will do all in His power to bring us through safe. When we consider these things, it seems almost wonderful that any one should be lost.

CHAPTER XVI.

God's Fidelity to His Promises.

THERE is nothing so reliable as God's word. "As we have heard, so we have seen," is the exclamation of David on beholding how completely the promises of God were performed. The like sentiment Solomon breathes when he says of God: "There hath not failed so much as one word of all the good things that He promised." God's word is, as David says, "like silver tried in the fire, purged from the earth, refined seven times." There is no dross in God's word, it is all pure truth.

But there are certain seasons when God's truthfulness to His promises shines out before the soul in a most clear manner; and it is then she is constrained to cry out with the Psalmist: "As we have heard, so have we seen." One of these periods is that of conversion. By conversion is meant the change from a worldly or wicked life, to a life of interior piety, when not only bad habits are put away, but the heart becomes radically new.

1. When God calls to conversion the soul does not generally absolutely refuse, but she lingers; just as when Lot was told to go out

of Sodom he lingered. And, as he lingered, the Angels took hold of his hands, and drew him out. So the soul lingers. She cannot bear the idea of parting with her old carnal pleasures, and her worldly toys. She is told of the light yoke of the Lord, and of that service which is perfect freedom; and hearing, she feels to long after a new and better life. Still the old looks pleasant, and the new cheerless to her eyes yet blind and carnal. But how to give herself to God? How to break from the degrading bonds, the toys which give no contentment? Divine grace alone can complete this work, lending to the will that resolute firmness which it in vain of itself essays to arrive at. Then quickly are the chains of our sins broken, and an immense gladness takes possession of the heart.

Then it is that the soul is led to exclaim: "As we have heard, so have we seen." For all that she had been told of the "peace that passeth all understanding," the "joy unspeakable and glorious," the "refreshment and rest" given by Christ to the heavy laden; these things she knows now, not by the report of others, but she feels and tastes them. She is amazed at her former blindness, her dulness, and insensibility. And as for those base joys of the flesh and of the world, she now quite detests them. "O how sweet," says Saint Augustine, "was it of a sudden become to me

not to have the sweets of those toys. What I had feared to lose I now cast gladly from me. For Thou didst drive them forth, Thou who art the true and Sovereign sweetness. Thou didst expel them, and instead didst thyself enter in, sweeter than all pleasure, brighter than any light, more secret than any hidden thing."

2. God's fidelity to His promises is also put to a severe test in the embracing of the Religious life. To go into a Convent is a daring experiment. What a wrench it is by which we are parted from home and family, from our wonted occupations and loved pursuits. Then the life itself which is embraced seems full of hardships, and so barren of natural delights. This is not the case merely with the very austere Orders, but with those, too, where the body has not such rough treatment. Then there is the Religious discipline, the obedience, the silence, the having nothing of one's own. Altogether, it requires no small courage to adventure oneself into this strange country. When people enter a Convent, they look for, not a safe road to heaven only, but also a greater happiness on earth. They want to have both worlds, the present and that which is to come. And they are not disappointed. God has promised this, and He is not slack in fulfilling His word. Worldlings have no idea of this. In the Religious life they only see the

thorns. They do not see the lily that grows amongst the thorns. They do not smell its delicious scent, or at least but at a distance. Then they say: "Oh, you have a hard life, but you will get your reward one day." They think that on this side the grave the Religious life is a dreadful weighty cross, a very misery, but that Religious bear with it for the sake of eternity.

They are, however, much mistaken. The Religious life is not the burdensome task they imagine it to be. For after all, what are its hardships? Nature is content with little, and grace with less. Plain coarse food relishes quite as well after awhile, as the most delicate dainties. One can sleep with quite as much comfort on a hard bed as on a soft one. In short, a simple, austere life is in itself quite as pleasant as a life of artificial worldly comfort. No doubt at first the giving up of these things costs, till a new habit is established.

Home and friends and independence are at all times a real sacrifice; but then, our Lord makes rich compensation for all that is lost on His account. He would be false to His word if He did not. For He has said: "There is no man, who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much in this present time." There is no waiting for

eternity. It is promised that in the present life he shall receive a hundred times as much joy, happiness, and contentment, as those things would have given him which, for Christ's sake, he has forsaken. Godliness, as the Apostle says, has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. So that the faithful Religious may say: "As we have heard, so have we seen. I had been told that Religious were excessively happy. I now find, by my own experience, that this is perfectly true."

3. There is, however, in this perishing life no complete happiness. The wine, on this earth, is ever mingled with gall. Perfect happiness is reserved for heaven. There we shall not be disappointed of our hope. We shall be able to say: "As we have heard, so have we seen." But if this be so, why is it that so few, even of the good, like to die? Apart from the fear of the judgment, or of purgatorial pains, good men fear to die.

It is because death ushers us into an unknown world,—a world for which we have no measure. We know what this world is like. This world has its sorrows, but it has its joys. We have round us dear familiar faces, and we think, Doth bitter death thus separate? We have our interesting plans, our pursuits, and pleasures. Altogether life is not so unlovely, but that, with Ezechias, we could do with a few more years.

Still, we have heard of heaven, of the fulness of joy, at God's right Hand. Why then linger below? Surely, to have heaven instead of earth were a happy exchange. We allow it, yet linger still. We should like to have palpable possession of heaven before losing our hold on earth. Doubtless no one that is in full possession of heaven ever wishes to re-enter this vale of tears. But till we can get a firm hold of that which we shall love more, we naturally cling to that which we have, though the love of it be less.

Once in possession, we shall have no regrets. Ample amends will be made for all we lose. Streams of bliss unutterable will to the full satisfy our hearts. For then we shall have, not those tiny rills of joy that are allowed us during our banishment, but in overwhelming billows will our God pour upon us all the treasures of His magnificence. Even the hearing of these things, what a comfort, what a strength, what a refreshment it is! But then it will no longer only be the hearing of the ear, for our eye shall see them. Then, in uncontrollable gladness shall we cry: "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God: God hath established her for ever."

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